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Schofield, T.

The history, institutions
and tendencies



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THE
HISTORY,
INSTITUTIONS, AND TENDENCIES,
OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
EXAMINED BY
SCRIPTURAL AUTHORITY:
BEING
A REPLY
TO THE LETTER OF VICE-ADMIRAL STIRLING.

BY T. SCHOFIELD,
MINISTER OF CHERTSEY CHAPEL, SURREY.

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I TELL YOU THE TRUTH?—*Gal. iv. 16.*

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Οὐκ ἐπ' ονειδίσιν, ἐδ' ἐπιχάρμησιν,
Ἀλλ' ὀδυνάισι λέγω, *THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY*
EURIPIDES.

"I mean not to reproach,
I mean not to insult; but with deep sorrow
I speak."

POTTER,

MY DEAR SIR,

When I took the liberty to offer you some brief and hastily written remarks, upon the Letter you had printed and circulated, in order to make known your peculiar views of the institutions of the Church of England, I confess I did not expect that they would obtain such a kind of consideration as they have done; much less that I should be imperiously called upon, to renew and enlarge my correspondence, in a public appeal. The remarks I made were never intended as a full answer to your Letter, for the obvious reasons which I assigned when I wrote them;—but, to establish certain positions, which, if received as true, would overturn, or at least correct, those views you entertained, and I deemed erroneous. I wrote not for the sake of controversy,—but for truth's and conscience' sake; and deeply do I regret, that what I wrote should only have been the means of eliciting the renewed expression of your views, in a still stronger, more lengthened, and even more objectionable form. It would, therefore, seem to be almost a hopeless task, to renew an attempt to carry a conviction to your mind, upon any truth or duty, which you have not heretofore received or observed;—or which, being presented to you in a new aspect, requires another kind of influence than that with which you have been previously acquainted. Even

"confirmations strong
"As proofs of holy writ,"

submitted to prove your views erroneous, have, by your own acknowledgment, produced a contrary effect;—and you seem almost to regret, that, as you had not interfered with me in my "ministerial duties," I should have ventured to interfere with you, whereby the dreams of "peace and safety," which float through your imagination, in consequence of your connexion with "the Church," as by law established, should have been disturbed. But still I am not without hope of good being accomplished, by these apparently untoward events, either in yourself or others; and how hopeless soever of good in the issue, and difficult in the prospect of execution, my present task were, I should be wanting in the respect I have always endeavoured to show you, I should betray the trust committed to my charge, and reproach the cause I profess to serve, if I were to allow the Letter you have published in reply to my remarks, to be put into circulation, without attempting to offer a counteraction to its influence.

It would be a breach of candour in either of us, not to concede to each other, what we claim for ourselves,—a full admission of conscientiousness and sincerity, in our advocacy of the causes we respectively espouse. For myself, it may be permitted me to say, that I write neither for amusement nor occupation :—the subjects of discussion do not admit of the one, nor do my numerous engagements, private and public, afford much leisure for the other; but for the truth's sake, and from the desire of its correct, as well as universal influence, I seize the moments of leisure, that may be afforded me, to write a reply to your Letter;—and whether a limited or extended measure of success attends my efforts, or whether it may appear as useless, I shall still have the conscious satisfaction of having done what I could. My sole and simple aim, I assure you, is united with the most devout desire, of advancing the present well being and final happiness of yourself, and of every one else before whom what I write may come; and if I unite with this highest and best desire of my heart, any wish for an improvement in the civil and ecclesiastical institutions of my country, I persuade myself that I shall not manifest, even though you may suppose I do, “an indifference to the revealed will of God,” nor “a levelling spirit, under the specious name of liberality.” What I am, in the office I sustain, and the station I occupy, my “speech and my preaching,” and my reputation, will most fully testify; “no man can spoil me of my glorying in these regions;” but what I am, as a politician, if such a name can be given to one who never interferes with politics, except when duty or necessity requires, may not be so well appreciated: but this I unhesitatingly avow, that I am a most decided advocate of a Reform both in Church and State. Reformation, however, is not revolution; improvement is not destruction; the putting of things in due order, is neither reducing religious nor civil institutions to a level. Whether, therefore, a “levelling spirit” be abroad or not, I cannot determine; but of this I am confident, that I am not possessed with it; and that it has always been, and ever will be, my desire to avoid every association with those, if any such there may be, whose notions are so absurd, and whose projects, involved in them, are so impossible to be realized. For were every institution, character, and kind of property, to be reduced to a level to-morrow, in a few days inequalities would be observable in the aspect of society; nature would give some elevation above others, minds would rise, knowledge would be associated with power, influence would receive support, the weak would acknowledge their dependance upon the strong, and society would again be united together by those links and compacts which ought not to be, and can never, for any lengthened period, be broken. As, however, you give your support to what is called “the Church of England;” so I claim the liberty to give my support to what I consider a purer, more spiritual, and infinitely more durable church,—the Christian Church, or, as it is called by an inspired apostle, in consequence of her connexion with “the pillar and ground of the truth,” “the Church of the living God.” But let me not be mistaken here;—brotherly affection and Christian love are due to every *Christian*, of every name and denomination under heaven; while, therefore, I dissent from, and even condemn, the errors of what you so repeatedly call “*your church*,” I differ from, and condemn *not you*, in consequence of your connexion with that church; *to you*, and *to all* that give it support, “I OWE CHARITY, BUT NONE TO YOUR ERRORS.”

You must excuse me, Sir, if, before I enter upon the discussion of the prominent topics of your Letter, I take the liberty to observe, that you have introduced a variety of topics incidentally, that have no direct bearing upon the points at issue between us; in some places correct principles are assumed, and most obviously erroneous conclusions drawn from them; things that differ are united together as if they perfectly agreed; references are made to things as having been said by me, which I never wrote, and even what I did write, has not been very fairly represented; so that it must not be expected of me to answer every sentence, paragraph, page, or section of your Letter, as that would swell my reply to a prodigious volume, and at once weary and perplex my readers and myself. My object is not to complain, but to inform; not to criticise, but to improve; and it is a good maxim for writers, as well as speakers, to remember, "*Optimus est orator qui dicendo animos audientiarum, et docet, et delectat, et permovet.*"

In my first communication to you, I strenuously pleaded for the supreme authority of the sacred Scriptures, in all matters of Christian faith and duty; because I thought I saw, that they were of little importance in your estimation, when put in competition with your Church, and the "regularly ordained and duly authorized clergy" of that church; and sorry am I to find, by the varied reasonings of your Letter, that I must begin at this beginning again. We must have a common standard to which we may appeal, as the support of our faith, and the directory of our duty; and where is this to be found, but in the Bible, the Word of God? You tell me, you admit this, and you even go so far as to express your readiness to concur in every thing that can be said "in praise of the Bible;" and according to your own fashion, you do "praise" it:—in one sentence admitting that "the meanest individual may comprehend enough of it for the attainment of eternal happiness," and in the third sentence following declaring, "you cannot allow that *any person* is capable of instructing himself, without the illustration of human learning, and that medium which Scripture itself has pointed out to be the Christian ministry." Can this be to the *praise* of the Scriptures, to admit their sufficiency for salvation in one sentence, and to deny their sufficiency in another? Difficulties arising out of the contemplation of scriptural truths may be solved, but surely such opposite declarations concerning the Scriptures themselves can never be reconciled. Nor, in my view, is *your praise* more worthy of the Scriptures when you attempt to magnify any ministry above them; because, when used by "unauthorised interpreters, *mean individuals* are found to err in judgment, or wander from the truth, either through the influence of a lively imagination, or a perverted mind. As well, surely, might you say, that because the same sun,—which lights the pious to the temple of truth, or the circle of Christian intercourse, or the abodes of privation and misery, at the same time conducts the idolatrous to their temples, the sensualist and the wicked to their scenes of dissipation and ruin,—should be blotted out of the system: a benefit being liable to abuse, can be no argument against its true use and enjoyment. Nor do the instances, which you adduce from Scripture, to support at once your peculiar views and *praise*, serve your purpose; for, upon farther examination, you will find, that both the Ethiopian Eunuch and Cornelius were singled out by the divine favour, from among the Gentiles, to receive the intelligence of the advent of Christ, and the proclamation of salvation

through his name; *an event which had not then been committed to writing*, which could not therefore form a part of the Scriptures they then had in their possession, and for their attentive and obediential regard to which, they were so eminently distinguished! Our circumstances are widely different from theirs; the sacred canon of Scripture is now completed; to it nothing is to be added, and from it nothing is to be taken away; no promise of future revelation, except that which the final revelation of Christ and of eternity will unfold, is given; and, therefore, all expectation of any kind of ministry giving additional power to it, to answer a design for which it is already pronounced to be sufficient, is equally visionary and absurd. The Christian ministry may help, and is designed for, the *dispensation* of the truth; but "the excellency of the power is of God, and not of us."

Sorry, indeed, am I, Sir, to tell you plainly, that notwithstanding you claim the character of a Protestant, you violate one of the first principles of the Protestant, yea, even of the Christian faith. Where is the difference, between the "Romanists, who call the clergy the church," and you, who plead for the clergy of the Church of England, as of more utility than the Scriptures themselves? I cannot perceive any. Nor, perhaps, will it be found upon farther investigation, is there much difference between the one church and the other, in this respect: the Church of Rome maintaining, "that the medium of the transmission of truth, through the unbroken line of the priesthood, has preserved it pure and incorruptible to the present day;" and the Church of England claiming "the power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in matters of faith:" your pleadings, therefore, for your church, and her own pleadings for herself, are in effect the same, and both contain the very essence of popery. Either the Scriptures are of paramount authority in matters of faith and duty, or they are not: if they are, then it is our peril to reject them; if they are not, then it is equally at our peril to receive them. This truth, the honoured instruments of reforming the Church both saw and felt; their consciences, enlightened by the Scriptures themselves, assured them that there was no other ground upon which the Reformation they proposed to bring about, could possibly, with any fair prospect of stability, rest. This was at once the conviction and principle of Wickliffe, the morning star of the Reformation in our own country; and hence he not only maintained, that the New Testament is a perfect rule of life and manners, and ought to be read by the people; but he was the first that translated the New Testament into English for the benefit of the people. And need you be informed, that it was the accidental finding of a copy of the Scriptures in the library of the Augustinian Monastery, at Erfurt, that brought Luther to the saving knowledge of the truth, and urged him, not only to separate himself from that church, of which he was once a most devoted member, but to exert all the mighty energies of his nature, to bring about that Reformation in Germany, the influence of which was soon felt throughout Europe, and in the benefits and blessings of which we have participated to the present day? "To the authority of popes and councils, to the dogmas of the schools, and all the sophistry of the casuists, he opposed simply the Bible,—that sole umpire,—that only ecclesiastical authority in matters of faith." Nor could the Reformers in our own country, under the authority of Henry the Eighth, pursue the Reformation they had in view, under any other direction, as the final ground of appeal, than

this ; and, therefore, though the clergy of the old religion opposed the translation of the Scriptures, impeded their circulation, and even did what they could to destroy them, yet they were ultimately translated, circulated, and commanded to be read among the people ; and had it not been for the blindness, bigotry, and tyranny of them that were in authority, on the one hand, and the culpable obsequiousness of our Reformers on the other, we should never have found, as we now unhappily do, Acts of Parliament substituted in the place of the infinitely superior authority and claims of the Word of God. The oft-quoted words of Chillingworth, (to which I referred in my first letter to you,) in his work, which will doubtless render his name “immortal,” though he so unhappily vacillated, are applicable here : “By the religion of Protestants,” he says, “I do not understand the doctrine of Luther, or Calvin, or Melancthon ; nor the Confession of Augsburg, or Geneva ; nor the catechism of Heidelberg ; nor the Articles of the Church of England ;” (for some say, he subscribed to them only as articles of peace, and not of faith ;) “no, nor the harmony of Protestant Confessions ; but that wherein they all agree, and which they all subscribe with a greater harmony, as a perfect rule of their faith and actions, that is, the Bible. The Bible, I say, the Bible only is the religion of Protestants ! Whatsoever else they believe besides it, and the plain irrefragable consequences of it, well may they hold it as a matter of opinion ; but as matter of faith and religion, neither can they with coherence to their own grounds, believe it themselves, nor require the belief of it of others, without most high and most schismatical presumption.” And equally appropriate, and not less forcible, are the pleadings of Bishop Horsley for the sufficiency of the Scriptures as a guide to salvation ; and I quote his words, because he is a well-known modern “church and state man,”—“*ab uno disce omnes*,”—a man who could sympathise with the “prelates and clergy of the fallen church of France,” while, at the same time, he could indulge the bitterest malignity and hostility towards the dissenters of his own country, although the very principle of his pleadings is the only support of dissent from the Church of England : “I will not,” he says “scruple to assert, that the most illiterate Christian, if he can but read his Bible, and will take the pains to read it in this manner, (*viz.* comparing parallel passages, “spiritual things with spiritual,”) will not only attain all that practical knowledge which is necessary to his salvation, but, by God’s blessing, he will become learned in every thing relating to his religion in such a degree, that he will not be liable to be misled, either by the refined arguments, or by the false assertions of those who endeavour to engraft their own opinions upon the oracles of God. He may be safely ignorant of all philosophy, except what is to be learned from the sacred books, which indeed contain the highest philosophy, adapted to the lowest apprehensions. He may safely remain ignorant of all history, except so much of the history of the first ages of the Jewish and the Christian church, as is to be gathered from the canonical books of the Old and New Testament. Let him study these in the manner I recommend, and let him never cease to pray for the illumination of that Spirit by whom these books were dictated ; and the whole compass of abstruse philosophy and recondite history, shall furnish no argument with which the perverse will of man shall be able to shake this learned Christian’s faith. The Bible, thus studied, will indeed prove to be what we Protestants esteem it, *a certain and sufficient rule of faith and practice*, a

helmet of salvation, which alone may "quench the fiery darts of the wicked."

How much to be lamented is it, that the same plea is not admitted as alone giving validity to the faith and practice of Protestant dissenters from the Church of England, that is admitted by the members of that church to justify their separation from the Church of Rome! WE regulate our faith and practice by this, and this alone. To relinquish this we consider would be a surrender of principle, an immolation of truth and duty upon the altar of what is called "expediency or state necessity," an act of rebellion against the exclusive Head of the Church, and King of Zion! And it is remarkable, that in all the vituperations of churchmen against dissenters, they are obliged completely to relinquish this first and fundamental article of Protestantism, in order to give the least semblance of propriety to what they utter.

Let it not be forgotten, however, that the making the Scriptures the ground of appeal, for the support of our faith and practice, is one essential principle of real religion; and no man can be truly religious without it. For never can it be too strongly stated, that the Scriptures existed long before the Church of England, or the Church of Rome, and therefore that neither the authority of the one nor the other, can be equal to them. These, and these only, were the guide of the Old Testament saints, and when completed, became the pillar and ground of the faith to the New. Thus Moses, in reference to that portion of them which he was commissioned to make known, said unto the children of Israel, "Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law." (Deut. xxxii. 46.) Isaiah, also, when he would call off the attention of the people from false prophets, and expose their delinquencies and delusions, said, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." And when the great Prophet of the church appeared, He—to whom all other prophets owed their inspiration and obedience, and who might, had it been consistent with the general utility of revelation, have dispensed with every appeal to the previously written word, and simply inculcated upon his own authority every thing he purposed to communicate for the salvation of man, without such an appeal,—even He made the law and the prophets, and the psalms, the subjects of his appeal, condemned the traditions of the elders, as making the commandments of God of none effect, and recommended all to search the Scriptures, to obtain at once the only satisfactory evidence of the rectitude of his character and the divinity of his claims. Nor do we any where find, that he ever acknowledged the authority of any ecclesiastical tribunal in matters of faith and conscience; "on the contrary, when describing the principles upon which *his* religion should be conducted, how frequently did he remind his disciples, that he alone was their Master and their Lord? He therefore represents their authority in the church as merely delegated, as derived solely from himself, and as vested exclusively *in them*. On this account their instruction and writings possessed the same authority in the primitive Christian church, which the writings of Moses and the prophets possessed under the preceding dispensation." Hence Paul, when reproofing those who would attempt to unite the simple and spiritual institutions of Christianity with the abrogated ritual of the preceding dispensation, and probably devices of their own inventions, as other delinquents have

done in succeeding ages, makes use of these emphatic and awful words, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or any angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed; as we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed!" And without referring again to those other passages of a similar import, which I have already introduced to your notice by my former communication, it may suffice to observe, that from these facts, "we are clearly warranted to infer, that the Scriptures then existing were deemed authoritative; that our Lord, and his Apostles, and the first Christians, appealed to them as such, in their directions and inquiries; and that if the authority of the Apostles was subject to the authority of that revelation which then existed, the authority of the church, in every age, ought to be subject to the same authority." To maintain the converse of this, would, I apprehend, be to belie our principles and nullify our profession together.*

But still you think *these Scriptures*, thus acknowledged as supremely authoritative and sufficient to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus our Lord, *want an interpreter*; and you plead for the adequacy of those kind of interpreters only, who are "regularly ordained and duly authorized" by that establishment, that "safe establishment," as you elsewhere call it, "powerful in its investigation of truth, and defence of the principles of Christianity and sound morals," and towards the preservation of which you deem it obligatory to give our "national support." That the translation of the Scriptures into every language spoken under heaven, and historical, critical, and experimental helps to their elucidation and application, are of great importance and utility; and that an evangelical ministry for the purpose of aiding the propagation and maintenance of the knowledge of salvation by Jesus Christ, is useful, desirable, yea, appointed by the exclusive Head of the Church; and so far as they are connected with the accomplishment of his purposes, indispensably necessary, I do not merely allow, but most strenuously maintain; but that the ministry of the Church of England or of the Church of Rome *alone*, is necessary for this, I most unequivocally and decidedly deny! The Church of Rome, we know, always pleaded for her infallibility as an interpreter or guide; and therefore, to support her pretensions, she set aside that which would have disproved it at once,—the Scriptures of truth, and denied the use of them to the people; and if the Church of England, the fairest and most productive offspring of the Church of Rome, pleads not for infallibility, she pleads, as you seem to feel *most strongly*, for her *uniformity*; and, on account of her uniformity, to be at least the safest directory to salvation. But in what does her uniformity consist? in her pleading for the supreme authority of the Scriptures, and at the same time by her laws and institutions completely overturning their authority?—in claiming the rights of con-

* See this subject most ably discussed and argued in Dr. Fletcher's "Lectures on the Roman Catholic Religion,"—a work deserving to be read by every Protestant Episcopalian, as well as Roman Catholic, and which should be found in the library of every Dissenter.

science for herself, but at the same time most cruelly invading those rights in others? or in training and authorising a ministry, who by their own undeviating uniformity of sentiment, principle, and practice, shall be "able to teach others also," how to think and act alike, in reference to the dictates and claims of real religion? Alas! as I shall attempt hereafter more fully to declare to you, in each of these respects, her boasted uniformity is her most glaring *deformity*; for, notwithstanding all her efforts to maintain an uniformity among her ministry, by the imposition of *oaths* of "*unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in and prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer*;" *the fact is incontrovertible*, that it is impossible to bring an equal number of men together, who make a profession of the same religion, to say nothing of *subscription* to "articles of faith," among whom a greater dissonance of opinion is found to prevail, upon the most essential principles of that religion; and who, therefore, not being agreed among themselves, can never afford any thing like a correct, much less an infallible, guidance to the faith and conduct of others. Some there are, indeed, who have submitted their hearts and consciences, and all that goes to form their moral character, to the Word of God; who, it may be, in early life, conformed to *your church*, and who, being "faithful men," are "able to teach others also;" but these are so notoriously *few* in number, as to form only a *sect* in the establishment in which they are found; and like the sect of old, almost every where spoken against, and even where they ought to be most loved and cherished; but take your guides from what class you please of your clergy, and still, without the Word of God, they will all be found *fallible, inefficient, and useless*. Were their authority to be once admitted as superior to the Scriptures, or even as necessary to give them validity, for the accomplishment of their own declared design, then would the divine authority of our holy religion be completely overturned; our preaching would be vain, our faith also would be vain; and we should yet be in our sins! To this standard, therefore, and *to this alone*, must every Christian minister make his appeal. From this armoury must we draw the weapons of our warfare, successfully to contend with the powers of darkness, on the world that lieth in subjection to the wicked one. Here must we find the "hidden manna," the food of our souls, and the fire of our devotions, and all the "things new and old," for the varied purposes of our ministry; and if we do not find it here, elsewhere we cannot; neither therefore should we save ourselves, nor them that hear us.

From these statements, which serve to establish the supreme authority of the Scriptures, (their divine origination being mutually admitted,) and the inefficiency of every kind of human aid, in the work of salvation, without them, the *right of private judgment*, as set forth for us in those Scriptures, follows as a matter of course. I know full well, that the "Romanists" invade and deny this right; that the Church of England, after the example of her "mother," has not been wanting in her invasions, if not her denials of this right; and that you also, in your pleadings for her, feel yourself incapable of admitting it. Hence, in your Letter, you speak of the "evils resulting from men interpreting the Scriptures for themselves; and of its being thought, that nothing has tended more to impede the progress of Christianity, than the latitudinarian ideas entertained of religious liberty, which frequently form an excuse for refusing obedience to

the church, and which, when acted on, constitute a man his own priest and temple;" and, farther, "that there is scarcely a favourite opinion which a fertile imagination may not extract from some portion of" the Bible: the inference from the whole of which language I take to be this; that if the Bible be not taken away from the people, the right of private judgment, somehow or other, should; and *absolute submission* to the Church of England be demanded of all. Happily, however, the times have long since passed away, for such sentiments, proceeding either from the pens of magistrates or clergymen, to excite any fear as to our liberties; and let them make what efforts they may, to enforce them upon the "unthinking many," still, in spite of all their efforts, the people, and especially all truly Christian people, *will think and act for themselves, as supremely amenable for their religious faith and practice only to that tribunal, from which there can be no appeal.* The simple statement of this right may be easily made; and both scriptural and rational pleadings in its favour be as easily multiplied. It was the prerogative of that God, who originally made us, and against whom we had rebelled, to furnish us with a revelation of his purposes and requirements, for our salvation. This revelation, to be of general, must also be of particular utility; it must not only be directed to man universally, but to man individually. And is it not undeniable, that it is so directed? Is not each individual therein addressed, as if he were the only and exclusive object of address? Are not repentance, and faith, and the varied influences of both, inculcated upon *each*, as well as upon *all* to whom it comes? and in consequence of this being its obvious character, are we not told, that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that *every one* may receive according to what he hath done in the body, whether good or evil?" If, then, this be the condition of every one of us; if we are thus favoured to be the objects of a revelation of the will of God for our salvation, and are held supremely responsible to Him for the regard we express to the favour we enjoy; what right has any man, or set of men, who in these respects, are on an equality of condition with ourselves, to interfere, to require of us certain modes of thinking and action in reference to the authority and claims of God upon us? Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Our Lord and his Apostles most plainly recognized this right, and made it the grounds of their appeals to the people. Yea, and why even of yourselves, said our Lord, judge ye not what is right? One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren; the princes exercise dominion, and they that are great exercise authority, *but it shall not be so among you.* "Prove all things," said the Apostle Paul, when addressing the Thessalonians, "and hold fast that which is good:" language, that evidently implied the previous exhibition of a standard to their minds, by which they might prove all things; and when they had found them to be good, adhere to them with the utmost stedfastness of mind. With this exhortation also accords that of the Apostle John, "Try the spirits whether they be of God;" as if he had said, ascertain by the only standard of truth and duty, not only what you hear from the professed teachers of Christianity, but their own peculiar qualifications for the office they sustain, or to the possession of which they have aspired. And even though this right was abused under the ministration of the Apostles, yet they never attempted to interfere with its exercise. In the church at

Corinth, there were great irregularities, abuses of gifts, debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults; but did the Apostles tell the Corinthians, that on this account they must never think for themselves, that they must abandon their right of private judgment, and submit with implicit deference to their uninspired teachers? No! Far, very far, was such an assumption of dominion from his mind; he asserted, indeed, his own inspired authority, as an Apostle of Christ, but to no other did he make the slightest appeal;—a proof of his consciousness that, if he had, he must have increased instead of lessening the disorders of the church. And the evils resulting from the attempts to withhold or restrain this right in subsequent periods of the history of the church, have been numerous and most affecting. When men have set themselves up as the judges, or authoritative directors of the faith and worship of their fellow men, so far as their efforts have succeeded, they have promoted only an *external conformity* to their credenda or dicta, but an *internal indifference*; and, instead of serving the cause of religion, have promoted positive infidelity and every evil work. If ever, therefore, any thing like a real uniformity has been, or is yet to be, brought about among the professors of the same religion, it must be, not by the imposition of creeds, and systems, and formularies of human devising, but by a voluntary agreement between inquiring, informed, and satisfied minds; an unity of sentiment and conduct, resulting from an unbiassed investigation of truth, and an experimental and practical acquaintance with its inestimable worth and perpetual utility. Not that we have any reason to expect, I apprehend, a *perfect* assimilation in our modes of thinking and action, in reference to the one faith of the gospel, because of the variety of our intellectual powers, our circumstances, and relationships in life; but, that when this faith really influences our minds in the way it ought, whatever be our differences upon non-essential points, we shall constantly aim and desire to maintain the unity of the spirit, in the bonds of peace, and in righteousness of life.

These, Sir, were the principles upon which the Teachers and first professors of Christianity uniformly acted; and while they did this, they maintained the purity of the churches, and extended their influence in the world; but when they departed from these,—when individuals or communities assumed a power over the consciences and conduct of their professed “brethren in the Lord,”—a power which, as we have just seen, the Apostles never attempted to exercise, because they had not dominion over them, but were helpers of their joy,—then human expediency, and policy, and covetousness, “which is idolatry,” formed an alliance between the church and civil government, and reduced, at least in appearance, that kingdom, which being not of this world, is destined to prove its independent, spiritual, and heavenly character—to a mere “national establishment.” But upon this point, you and I do most decidedly differ. So strongly prejudiced are you in favour of that religion only which is *national*, that you unequivocally declare in your Letter, that “a pure form of Christianity cannot exist, unless it be the accredited religion of the state,” and forms a part of what you most unscripturally imagine is a “national covenant with God.” How then are we to ascertain what is truth on this point? Or what are the authoritative dictates, the accredited will of God upon this matter? Now, in answering this inquiry, I know not that I can make use of more

appropriate or forcible language, than that of the eloquent Chrysostom, in one of his homilies. "All Christians," he says, "ought to have recourse to the Scriptures. For at this time, since heresy has infected the churches, the divine Scriptures alone can afford a proof of genuine Christianity, and a refuge to those who are desirous of arriving at the true faith. Formerly it might have been ascertained, by various means, which was the true church; but at present there is no other method left to those who are willing to discover the true church of Christ, *but by the Scriptures alone*. And why? Because heresy has all outward observances in common with her. If a man, therefore, be desirous of knowing the true church, how will he be able to do it amidst so great a resemblance, but by the Scriptures alone? Wherefore our Lord, foreseeing that such a great confusion of things would take place in the latter days, orders the Christians to have recourse to nothing but the Scriptures." This, then, I should hope, you will admit to be a fair, just, and decisive method of ascertaining the "certainty of those things wherein we have been instructed."

It may, perhaps, appear superfluous for me to point out the erroneous notions that have been affixed to the term church, by which many have gone themselves, and led others, astray; but as it may be a means of correcting those notions, I will at least name them. Some confine their ideas of a church to the building in which people meet for professedly religious purposes; and all other places, used for similar purposes,—not erected, shaped, and furnished in a similar manner,—(a manner which it would not be difficult to prove, is not merely Norman or Roman, but positively Heathen,) are deemed execrable by them; and consequently, that all who frequent them must be equally execrable also. But, surely, a little reflection must convince you, that ignorance,—the profoundest ignorance,—that ignorance which is the parent of superstition and bigotry alone,—could give rise, or offer support, to such an interpretation of the term as this. Others—and you too, Sir, among the number—most plainly intend, by your application of this term, to signify an union of parishes and dioceses, under the superintendence of archbishops, bishops, deans, chancellors, archdeacons, rectors, vicars, deacons, or curates, stretching their authority over a whole kingdom, and all avowing their submission to a secular domination,—the king, or queen, or parliament,—and this is called "our national church," or the Church of England. And others acknowledge a still more extensive union as exclusively forming the holy Catholic Church, under an ecclesiastical head, as the Church of Rome. And by the same term I am most ready to acknowledge, some pitifully narrow-minded people understand that particular body of professing Christians, be they self-named *particular baptists*, or any other with which they stand united, to the exclusion of all other professing Christians whatsoever; but I know not of any who entertain such absurd notions of a church, as those you tell me the members of "my persuasion" do, by which, of course, you intend the whole body of Congregational Dissenters;—although, without intending it as a mere retort, I should say, that the members of a "national establishment" only can consider "the church as extending over the whole world where the name of Christianity is in use, without laying down any specific rule to ascertain its presence,"—*indiscriminate communion* being the well-known practice of your church, and a credible profession of Christian faith, being invariably required as a pre-requisite and a constant adjunct of communion with us.

The true use and application of the term, however, is not, I apprehend, difficult to be ascertained. The word church, as we find it used in the New Testament, is a compound which signifies to call out; and was anciently used to signify an assembly of the people, called out by the civil magistrate. Thus it is used in Acts xix. 32, 39; and those who translated the Old Testament from the Hebrew into Greek, uniformly translated the Hebrew word, used in reference to the Israelitish church, into that word in the Greek which signifies, an assembly or congregation. Our English word church, is derived from the Greek word *κυριος*, signifying, the Lord,—the Head of the church, by way of eminence; from whence we have the adjective *κυριακος*, belonging to the Lord; and thence Kyriac, kirk—church. Thus, then, by a simple examination of the meaning of the words used to denote a church, we are led to form two very important ideas concerning it:—the first is, that it denotes an assembly of the people; and the second is, that it is an assembly of the people, acknowledging their subjection to one Lord, and called together by his authority.

If we extend our inquiries still farther, we shall find that this term is sometimes used, in the New Testament, to comprehend,—1st. All those that have died in the faith, from the beginning of the ages to the present hour; and all those alive upon the earth, exercising a similar faith, and sharing in similar privileges, which all the faithful have enjoyed and continue to enjoy; hence the Apostle (Heb. xii. 23) speaks of it as the peculiar privilege of Christians, to come—to the spirits of just men made perfect. 2ndly. All those that are scattered over the face of the earth, who believe in Christ, who place their dependance upon Him as their only Mediator and Advocate with the Father, and who acknowledge and submit themselves to his authority, as the only Law-giver of his people; hence, in answer to the confession of Peter, our Lord, probably pointing to himself, while, at the same time, he referred to the confession of Peter, said, “On this rock will I build my church;” and hence He is compared to the Head, and all who are united to Him by a vital influential faith, are compared to the members of one body—the true church. (See Matt. xvi. 16—18; Eph. iv. 15, 16.) And, of course, 3dly, the word must designate any particular society of Christians accustomed to assemble in one place. Thus it is used in reference to a meeting of Christians in an ordinary dwelling. (Rom. xvi. 5; 1 Cor. xvi. 19; Col. iv. 15; and Philemon 2.) But most frequently it is used in reference to an assembly of Christians, accustomed to meet together in a particular place, for the purpose of observing the instituted ordinances of our holy religion; hence we read of the churches of Corinth, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Antioch, and of Asia; but in no one of the applications of the term, by the inspired writers, do we find the smallest pattern or indication of any thing approximating to a national church. The believers of the contrary, may be safely and universally challenged to prove their belief, *if they can*. The true church ever has been, and now continues to be, one, *not nationally*, but only *spiritually*, in consequence of the vital union of her members to one perpetually living Head; their exclusive subjection to his authority, and their perfect independence of every secular alliance and authority; and consequently, that like the character of her divine Author, she has ever been a perfect novelty in the world, and must ever unfold his attractions and influence with ever fresh and absorbing lustre.

Continuing our investigations of this matter, under the direction of

inspired authority, we shall not find it difficult to ascertain how the first churches or assemblies of the disciples of Christ were called together. The Apostles were themselves first called by his grace, and endowed with sufficient powers for the execution of their commission. They then went forth, preaching every where, and it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believed. By this means the number of the disciples increased and multiplied, and certain institutions and meetings were agreed to by them, which they afterwards conscientiously and religiously observed. (See Acts ii. 37—47; v. 42; and vi. 7.) With this association, of course, none united themselves but those who were called by the same means, who were influenced by the same principles of faith and obedience to Christ, and who afterwards proved the sincerity of their profession, by the purity and consistency of their conduct; and if any others crept in among them, they were speedily detected and denounced, or became the subjects of that discipline with which the Lord had entrusted his church, for edification, and not for destruction. (See Acts v. 1—14; viii. 18—25; 2 Cor. xiii. 10.) Hence, the Apostles commended those who had first given themselves unto the Lord and unto them, that is, as the office-bearers of the Christian church, according unto the will of God. (2 Cor. viii. 5.) Upon these accounts, then, the definition of a church, given by the compilers of the Thirty-nine Articles, is correct. (Art. 19,) “The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in the which,” or among whom, “the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments duly administered, according to Christ’s ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.” And in this, the right possessed by the Christian church, of requiring, in all its admitted members, a credible profession of faith, and all that is necessary to its preservation as such, is undoubtedly set forth and acknowledged, otherwise the church could never consist of “a company of faithful men.”

Under these circumstances the Christian church took its rise, and rapidly extended its influence in the world. The Apostles and first preachers of the gospel, marked by that simplicity of character which the conscious possession of truth alone could inspire, strangers to the meretricious ornaments of speech, with which the wise men of this world sought the applause of their fellow-men; unsupported by any secular alliances or adventitious aid which the power of men could afford them; they went forth to meet and vanquish the opposition of the world: and He who gave them their work to do, and furnished them with the materials for doing it, every where maintained his authority and magnified his grace;—till at length the whole aspect of society began to change; the pride, prejudice, and enmity of the Jews were slain; the impure mysteries and idolatrous practices of the gentiles were relinquished; their temples and altars were deserted or overthrown; and, “from the setting of the sun even to the going down of the same, the name of the Lord was magnified, and in every place incense was offered unto his name and a pure offering.” It is delightful, indeed, to call to mind the state of the church at this period of her history. Notwithstanding all the opposition with which she had to contend, she still appeared fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners. Deriving her light from the Sun of Righteousness, armed with the panoply of his truth, and resuscitated by his own celestial influence, amidst all the power that was directed for her destruction, her ranks, instead of diminishing, increased; and the oft-repeated adage was verified in her experience,

“ the blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.” The Apostles in succession had retired from their varied labours and sufferings, and sealed their testimony with their blood. One only remained—“ that disciple whom Jesus loved,” and he was banished to the desolate isle of Patmos : but then he was destined to receive, and become the last honoured instrument of conveying, the commendations, corrections, and premonitions of inspired truth, in a form which should become a kind of standing prophet in the church, through the successive periods of her existence; and like the sun at his setting, the Spirit of truth hereby assumed a milder but more resplendent lustre, and marked his departure by filling earth and heaven with his glory ! The book and the prophecy were closed ; and the members of the mystical body of Christ became at once the depositaries and conservators of its contents. Precious treasure ! Inestimable deposit ! Tree of life, destined to impregnate the dying race of man with the seeds of immortality ! But the fathers were gone ; and neither the prophets, nor apostles, nor their immediate companions and successors, were permitted to continue by reason of death. The wonder-working power of the Spirit was withdrawn ; and uninspired men, though men of God, faithful to the trust committed unto them, and those that they were instrumental in bringing them to the faith and obedience of the gospel, were now left to carry on the affairs of the church in the world. And too speedily, alas ! did their weakness, their selfishness, and tendency to defection, in sentiment and practice, display themselves. While “ the sect of Christians,” as they were termed, were every where spoken against, and seasons of persecution either prevailed or were feared, the purity of their character shone conspicuously, and not unfrequently the power of their faith, and fortitude, and perseverance, filled the minds of their persecutors with astonishment and fear ; but when these seasons of trial had passed away, and those of external peace and prosperity arrived, a state of conduct private and public was gradually assumed, which showed the most lamentable deviations from scriptural direction or apostolic order. “ Long peace,” says Cyprian, in his ‘ Treatise on Declensions,’ “ had corrupted the discipline divinely revealed to us. Each was bent on improving his patrimony, and had forgotten *what believers had done under the apostles, and what they ought always to do*. They were brooding over the arts of amassing wealth ; the pastors and the deacons each forgot their duty ; works of mercy were neglected, and discipline was at the lowest ebb. Luxury and effeminacy prevailed ; meretricious arts in dress were cultivated ; fraud and deceit were practised among brethren. Christians could unite themselves in matrimony with unbelievers ; *could swear not only without reverence, but without veracity*. Many bishops, neglecting the peculiar duties of their stations, gave themselves up to secular pursuits. They deserted their places of residence, and their flocks. They travelled through distant provinces in quest of pleasure and gain ; gave no assistance to their needy brethren, but were insatiable in their thirst of money. They possessed estates by fraud, and multiplied usury.”*

* Had this writer been a prophet, instead of a simple recorder of facts which came in review before him, as he was writing for the benefit of the church, he could not have given a more accurate description of the state of things that do actually prevail in the Church of England in the present day. The prophet Isaiah, however, had actually described some such characters ages before him.—See Isaiah l. 10---12.

Thus the affairs of the church went on generally from bad to worse : the mystery of iniquity, which had began to work even in apostolic times, continued its perverting and morally desolating influence, until at length, by the professed conversion of Constantine, the church was united to the state, and imperial authority was employed, to enforce, by temporal penalties, the observance of Christian institutions ; and the emperor assumed the sole right of governing the church. The consequences of this were soon found fatal to spiritual religion, to the rights of private judgment, and to the privileges of the people, in union with their ministers or bishops, to manage the affairs of the church. “ Hence it came to pass,” says Mosheim, “ that at the conclusion of the fourth century there remained no more than the mere shadow of the ancient government of the church. The privileges which had belonged to the presbyters and people, were usurped by the bishops ; and the rights which had been formerly vested in the universal church, were transferred to the emperors, and to the subordinate officers and magistrates” of the empire. In this way the nominally Christian church became a kingdom of this world ; its ministers an army of spiritual janizaries, depending upon the sovereign for their support ; and its institutions subservient to the accomplishment of the most arbitrary designs. And in this way was the hierarchy of the church of Rome completed ; and she became emphatically what she had been previously designated, “Mystery—Babylon the Great—the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.”

It was not until about the sixth century that Christianity was introduced into Britain. Previous to that period, all in this country were in the darkness of heathenism—the worshippers of imaginary deities—the victims of the grossest superstitions and cruelties. Ethelbert, we are told by our own, as well as ecclesiastical historians, the king of Kent, married Bertha, the only daughter of Caribert, king of Paris, having previously stipulated that she should enjoy the free exercise of her religion. This princess, by the influence she acquired, gradually prepared the way for the introduction and establishment of Christianity ; and Gregory the Great sent into Britain, A. D. 596, forty benedictine monks, with Augustine at their head, in order to bring to perfection what the pious queen had so happily began.

By these records, then, you perceive, Sir, that you have erred in what you have stated on the tenth page of your Letter. So much of antiquity as you claim for it, belongs not to the Church of England : instead of being a branch of the church founded by the Apostles, it is only a branch of the papistical church of France, and was never introduced into this country, until all the simple institutions of Christianity were debased and corrupted by the “mother of abominations.” It would require, however, a volume to bring the history of the church in this country to the period when its reformation was commenced, during the reign of Henry the Eighth ; and when we obtained that kind of Establishment which has been continued, with little variation, to the present day. Your statements also respecting the continental reformers and reformations, are no less erroneous, and contradicted alike by the testimony of friends and foes. The Bible, and the Bible only, as we have already stated, was the foundation on which the Foreign and British reformations were professedly placed ; and whatever of “human authority” was connected with them, was not owing so much to the preference of the Reformers, as to the uncontrollable circumstances in which they

found themselves placed. Your assumption, then, of "human authority" being the only hinge upon which they turned, being proved erroneous, your sneer at "sects" and "dissent" amounts to nothing. Had you taken the trouble correctly to inform yourself of the facts of the case, before you wrote upon this, as well as many other events, you would not have laid yourself open to charges of inaccuracy so frequently as you have done. The opposition of the King of England to the Pope, on account of his reluctance to grant a divorce from Queen Catherine, and his assumption of supremacy in the Church of England in the place of the Pope, and the more general use and translation of the Scriptures, paved the way for our Reformation.

Articles of faith and practice for the clergy, and forms of prayer, were drawn up, and enforced upon the attention and usage of the people. This was the dawn of the Reformation; and under the subsequent reign, it seemed to rise to greater maturity, and presage the advance of perfect day. Puritanism, or that profession of religion which urges a man supremely to regard, in his faith and practice, the *pure dictates of the word of God*, in opposition to all human authority and impositions whatsoever,—puritanism had exerted a considerable influence over the minds of the people previous to these reigns, by the aid of Wickliffe and the Lollards, as they were called; but during this and the subsequent reigns, it began to display itself in still stronger forms. Upon the accession of that monster in the shape of a woman, called Queen Mary, popery was again established, and all the arguments urged against its unrighteous tyranny, were met with imprisonment, torture, or the stake! The generality of the clergy were either too ignorant, or too selfish, or too papistical, to make any stand against the domination to which they then became subject, although, not long before, they had sworn against it; and therefore, with few exceptions, they turned back again to the bondage from which they had been delivered. The acts of former reigns for the destruction of heretics were revived; and Hooper, Rogers, Ridley, Latimer, and Cranmer, were among the most noted of the martyrs for conscience and truth's sake: and while hundreds of others, men, women, and children, were doomed to similar sufferings, even unto death, the grave itself was searched for the bones of departed worthies, that they also might be burned for their nonconformity. At length, when the "souls under the altar" multiplied their cries for vengeance, and the earth itself groaned under the barbarous tyranny of her oppressors, Mary died, and Elizabeth ascended the throne. Persecution, in one shape, was then indeed arrested. The reformed religion, as made out in the reign of Henry, regained the ascendancy; and for the support of the prerogative, as "Head of the church of this realm of England," which the *queen* claimed, after the example of her father, the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity were passed. The Prayer Book and the Articles of the Church of England, nearly in the same form as we have them now, were then enforced by fines and banishment, a return from which was to be visited with death. All that would not conform to *her* church,—for *she*, be it remembered, was the avowed Head of this church, (and other queens *may* come in her place,) and as such she claimed the prerogative to compose a form of prayer for the use of her people, and to stop all preaching among them;—to direct the clergy *what* they should preach and *when*, and finally to determine what should be deemed *heretical*, and what accorded with the true sayings of God. All, I say, who would not conform to her church, were

the objects of her anger and opposition, and that she might the more effectually maintain her prerogative undisputed; she declared, that she could not satisfy *her conscience without crushing the puritans*; and, alas! by this tender-hearted *woman-head* of the Church of England, multitudes of the wise and the pious, among her own clergy, were suspended and deprived; the prisons were every where crowded with the puritans; and when brought to their trials, were placed by the side of thieves and murderers; and even their lives were sacrificed by their protracted imprisonments and sufferings, or else by the hands of the executioner! Her successor, James, was too much impregnated, as a Stuart, with the ideas of prerogative and right divine, though he had been brought up under the presbyterian form of church government, to relax any thing in favour of a purer form of worship than that of the Church of England, as established by law; and, therefore, though moved by the millenary petition, (so called because it was signed by nearly a thousand preachers of the gospel,) to appoint a conference at Hampton Court, over which he presided as sole arbiter; he denied the justice of the pleas of the puritans, and declared he would either "make them conform, or hurry them out of the land;" and while many perished in prison, hundreds went into voluntary exile. Charles, his son and successor, was equally infatuated with the same hereditary passion for arbitrary government; and, under the control of his queen, a determined catholic, he aimed to enforce conformity to that Church, of which he was the head, by imprisonment, by the pillory, by the slitting of noses, and the cutting off of ears; by branding, banishment, and death! And, lest any should escape the grasp of his despotism, he prohibited voluntary exile, that no foreign land might afford the liberty he here denied them. At length, his violations of the laws and liberties of his people, compelled them to fight in their own defence, and to bring him to a premature and violent end. Perhaps I need scarcely remind you, that the brightest period of the civil and religious history of our country, until the accession of William the Third, followed these mournful and deprecated events. Episcopacy was abolished by Parliament; and the Act ordained, that, after the 5th Nov. 1643, there should be no archbishop, bishop, chancellor or commissary of any archbishop or bishop, nor any dean, sub-dean, dean and chapter, archdeacon, nor any chancellor, chanter, treasurer, sub-treasurer, succentor or sacrist, of any cathedral or collegiate church; nor any prebendary, canon, canon residentiary, petty canon, vicar, choral chorister, old vicars or new vicars, of or within any cathedral, or collegiate churches in England or Wales, &c. &c. And thus, Sir, that wondrous apostolic succession for which you contend, but which history proves to be the mere chimeras of a high churchman's imagination, was completely set aside, under the wise and powerful protectorate of Cromwell. The clergy that were removed from their stations, either for their manifest incapacity or inexcusable immorality, were yet treated with a liberality which they never deserved, one-fifth of their income being reserved for their support:—the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, those common receptacles of anomalous adjuncts, learning and vice, were purified; and literature and religion flourished and prevailed *even in them*, in unprecedented degrees, under the superintendence of the puritans:—sobriety, honesty, and virtue, generally prevailed among the people; the magistrates, punctual in the discharge of their duties, became

emphatically "a terror to evil doers, and a praise unto them that do well:"—the entire sanctity of the Christian Sabbath was asserted and maintained; the simplicity and spirituality of prayer and the preaching of the pure Word of God abounded; the well-known learning and piety of those who were either engaged in, or trained up for, the work of the ministry of those days, must secure their celebrity till the end of time:—and the whole aspect of the affairs of the country assumed a state of moral order, which has never since been realized. But, alas! among the inscrutable mysteries of Providence, it was at length found, that a Stuart, in the person of that faithless, libidinous, and persecuting bigot, Charles the Second, was destined to return to the throne of England; and a tyranny, almost as dark and intolerant as had ever been exercised by the Church of Rome, to gain the re-ascendancy with him! Indeed, one's heart recoils at the review of the hypocrisy, perfidy, impositions, and barbarities of this reign! It was *assumed* by the advocates of the prerogative and of the Church of England, that his father had been murdered, that he had died a martyr, although, (without pleading for the adequacy of the tribunal before which he was tried, he had as obviously been as guilty of treason against the people, as it was possible for any of the people to have been guilty of treason against him,) and, therefore, an act was passed, to attain the king's judges, "dead or alive;" and, accordingly, Cromwell, and Bradshaw, and Ireton, were taken out of their graves, were hung up at Tyburn, had their heads cut off, and were afterwards thrown into a hole under the gallows!* Imprisonment, banishment, forfeiture of estates, and deaths in cruel forms, were visited upon others, who had shared in this unhappy affair. At a subsequent period, the court and bishops, not content with the violations of justice in their treatment of the puritans who were left alive, again descended into the grave, and dug up the bodies of those who had died, and were buried, during the late times, in Westminster Abbey, lest their dust should, some time or other, mix with those *loyal* and *sacred beings* that should there be deposited. Yes! and this was the period when the Church of England, as we now have it, obtained its last settlement. It was *then*, that the finishing stroke was given to the semi-catholic and semi-protestant Liturgy; and to the semi-scriptural and semi-secular Articles of the Book of Common Prayer. And it was *then*, that the Act of Uniformity passed, which was to take effect on Lord's-day, the 24th of August, 1662; and when all who would not give their unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in, and prescribed by, the Book of Common Prayer," (*that more than Bible to the Episcopalians*,) were to be expelled the Establishment! Iniquitous decision! Some had never seen the Prayer Book before they were called upon to swear their approval of it! And all the puritans, to whom the treacherous Charles had promised free toleration before his restoration, it was well known, had the strongest objections to some parts of it, and had they continued their connexion with the Establishment, would have used the rest: but *all* who would not subscribe,—and on that fatal day their

* And so wise and deserving of commendation has this policy appeared to the *University of Oxford*, that they have preserved in their museum, to this day perhaps, (at least ten years ago I saw it,) a skull, which they have the satisfaction to suppose, contained the brains of Cromwell; although, not the shadow of a resemblance exists between it, and the portraits which are generally set forth of him.

number amounted to TWO THOUSAND,—were expelled their livings, amidst the deprecations and distresses of their people,—themselves and families reduced to poverty and destitution; and, what was worse, were exposed to persecutions, imprisonments, and deaths, infinitely more appalling than poverty and want, or any of the ordinary calamities of life!!! “Upon these foundations, and with these triumphs, was the present constitution of the Church of England restored.” Nor was it thought enough, that those wise, learned, and holy men, “ministers of Christ,”—Owen, Manton, Bates, Goodwin, Grew, Annesly, Calamy, Baxter, Pool, Caryl, Charnock, Gale, Howe, Clark, Henry, and a host of others—whose works, as well as sufferings, will endear their memories to the hearts of Christians, while Christianity has a heart to dwell in on this side eternity,—nor was it enough, I say, in the view of the head, the bishops and clergy of the Church of England, that *two thousand* ministers of Christ should be reduced, by their expulsion from that Church, to circumstances so precarious and trying; but every thing was done against them, that could cut off their hope of relief, except by death. And when their friends and their flocks would have sheltered and followed them, the Conventicle, and Five-mile Acts were passed, by which no more than *four* persons could meet together, for the purpose of religious worship, except according to the form established by law; or if they met, it could only be where the people were either afraid or indisposed to go! In virtue of these Acts, the gaols, all over the kingdom, were filled with Protestant dissenters; while the papists had the good fortune to be covered under the wing of the prerogative. The people stood by their ministers, until they were either imprisoned or ruined, or compelled to remove with their families and property to more hospitable shores! The cry of misery was heard through the land! The Independents, Anabaptists, and Quakers, were objects of peculiar hostility;—they were dragged to Newgate, till Newgate could hold no more; and every kind of annoyance, vexation, and cruelty, was visited upon them, with a barbarity unequalled! So revolting, indeed, was the conduct of the Church of England, at this time, *and it should not be forgotten, that it was at this time it obtained its present character and authority in the country*, that even the Earl of Castlemain, a Roman Catholic, wrote of it in the following terms:—“It was never known,” says he, “that Rome persecuted as the bishops do, those who adhere to the same faith with themselves, and established an inquisition against the professors of the strictest piety among themselves; and, however the prelates complain of the bloody persecution of queen Mary, it is manifest that their persecution exceeds it; for, under her, there were not more than two or three hundred put to death, whereas, under their persecution, above treble that number have been rifled, destroyed, and ruined in their estates, liberties, and lives!” The exact number has never probably been ascertained; it is stated, however, upon good authority, that between the Restoration and the Revolution, not less than 70,000 families were ruined, and above 10,000 persons destroyed!

But I can pursue this detail of woe, and misery, and suffering, no longer! Histories of England, and especially Neale’s History of the Puritans, from whose volumes I have now furnished you with this sketch, will be found to finish the picture, in all its horrifying and heart-sickening forms; and to prove, unanswerably, that the present

Church of England is founded in the worst of tyrannies, cruelties, and barbarities; and being a progeny, "the firmest friend and natural ally" of the Church of Rome, acknowledged, on all hands, to be the completest anti-christian power with which the moral world was ever desolated, is destined by the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, "to be consumed with the spirit of his mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of his coming.—(Compare Matt. xxix. 29, 30, with 2 Thess. ii. 7—12; and Rev. xviii.)

It is true, that the times have altered. It is true, that on the accession of William the Third, the Toleration Act was passed, and all Dissenters had liberty of worship and protection in the enjoyment of their rights. And it is true, that the House of Hanover have always preserved these rights inviolate; and that George the Fourth adorned his crown with the richest gems acquired in his reign, by the repeal of those Acts, (which your Letter tells me, you wish were, even now, in force,) which imposed disabilities alike upon Catholics and Dissenters, and were equally disgraceful to the civil and ecclesiastical institutions of the country; but still the very term *toleration* implies an unrighteous invasion of the rights of conscience, on the one hand, and an impious assumption of the prerogative of God, to grant liberty of conscience, on the other; still, therefore, *equal liberty* is needed; and not till the arrogance, and bigotry, and inquisitorial domination of the churchman is completely subjugated;—not till all the anti-christian appendages of the Roman Catholic and Episcopalian hierarchies are removed out of the way;—not till the Church is separated from the state, and let alone, (as she was in the purest periods of her history, and is now among Dissenters,) to seek her own establishment, and find her own way in the world, will any thing like civil peace and prosperity, or religious influence and enjoyment, prevail or continue in the country! "Take down," said an eloquent member of the House of Commons, a few days since, "take down the golden domes of your Establishment, or they will fall in, in the shocks of the moral earthquake with which you are threatened, and bury the whole edifice in ruin!"

From many passages in your Letter, it seems difficult to ascertain what ideas you intend to convey, or what your unbiassed views are, concerning the Establishment. In some places you speak of it as an infallible directory; as embodying within itself all that is essential to the salvation of the race of man, and every thing without itself, as heretical, and therefore leading directly to the gulph of perdition! Sometimes you seem ready to plead against its union with the state; and then you call for the perpetuity of its "national support," as necessary for its continued existence, and "protecting us against the machinations of internal, as well as external, enemies." Now, you seem to rest all your pleas in its favour, upon scriptural grounds alone; and then you so completely lose sight of this authority, as to persuade yourself, that the dictates of the *Prayer Book* are an adequate substitute in its place. Therefore, I apprehend, how variable soever these pleadings in favour of the Church of England may be, that the fairest conclusion I can draw from them, as most fully expressive of your views, is this: that this Church, as it is now established, "is the exact and true Church, without any alteration, being precisely such as it was founded by Christ and the Apostles." And I know that you are not at all singular in your belief, and that quo-

tations might easily be multiplied from the writings of others, which would, in effect, amount to a similar testimony ; but before this testimony can be admitted as true, we must beg *you to prove* that there were archbishops, lord bishops, deans, sub-deans, deans and chapters, prebendaries, archdeacons, chancellors, canons, precentors, old vicars or new vicars, rectors, curates, &c. appointed by Christ or his Apostles ; or even mentioned in any accredited history of the Church, during the first three centuries after the propagation of Christianity in the world ; or until the character of the “man of sin” was completely formed. As however upon such grounds your proofs must completely fail you—and to no other would, or ought you to appeal, as a professedly *Christian* character—I must assume, that all disputes in favour of such an unauthorised arrangement of ecclesiastical officers, is at an end ; and proceed simply to the consideration of the only three orders of your clergy, for whom a form of consecration is prescribed by your Book of Common Prayer. “The fact,” you say, “is undeniable, that the Church has been governed by bishops, priests, and deacons, from the Apostles downwards.”

In addressing myself to the consideration of this matter, I shall avail myself of a little assistance from the Reformers of the Church, in the first place. John Wickliffe, of whom we have already spoken as the morning star of the Reformation, shall come first. “I boldly assert one thing,” says he, “that in the primitive church, or in the time of Paul, two orders of the clergy were sufficient : that is, a priest* and a deacon. In like manner, I affirm, that in the time of Paul, the presbyter and bishop were names of the same office. This appears from 1 Tim. iii. and Tit. i. ; and the same is testified by that profound theologian, Jerome : ‘By the ordinance of Christ, priests and bishops were all one ; but, afterwards, the emperor divided them, and made bishops, lords, and priests their servants ; and this was the cause of envy, and quenched much charity. For the ordinances of Christ are formed in meekness, in unity, and charity, and in contempt of riches and high estate.’” In answer to some questions proposed to a select assembly at Windsor Castle, in the reign of Edward the Sixth, Cranmer avows, “the bishops and priests were at one time, and were not two things, but both one office, in the beginning of Christ’s religion.” The testimonies of Tyndal, Lambert, and Barnes, who sealed their testimony to the reformed faith with their blood, are to the following effect : that “there were but two officers of divine institution in the church, viz. elders or bishops to feed the flock, and deacons to minister the charity of the church to the poor and needy.” Other testimonies, of equal antiquity and note, might be multiplied ; but these will suffice to prepare the way for what I may be able to advance from the New Testament.

That the term bishop is used in the New Testament synonymously with presbyters or elders, pastors or shepherds, ministers and guides, and that these names are given to the bearers of the same office indiscriminately, and are, therefore, to be taken only as descriptive of the different duties of that office, will appear from the following statements. In Acts xx. it is recorded, that Paul called for the *elders* of the church at Ephesus, and in ver. 28, he exhorts these same *elders*, as bishops,

* The term priest, is a contraction of presbyter, (the Saxons used the term preoster, thence came preste and priest,) and were it always used according to its true etymology, would be unobjectionable ; but it is well known that it is used to denote a distinct order of ecclesiastical officers, not warranted by the New Testament, and therefore to be rejected. Wickliffe evidently uses it as synonymous with presbyter.

ἐπισκόπους, or overseers. In Tit. i. Paul reminds him that he left him in Crete, to ordain elders,—and that a *bishop* must be blameless. In 1 Pet. v. Peter says, “the elders who are among you I exhort, who also am an elder—feed the flock of God—taking the oversight—the bishopric”—ἐπισκοποῦντες—“not by constraint,” &c. Of course, the numbers of these in a church would be regulated according to the number of members forming it. In some places one would suffice, in others two or more would be necessary. Thus in the church at Ephesus there were elders: so also Paul addresses himself to the church at Philippi—“with the bishops and deacons.” Upon this latter passage the Rev. T. Scott, an approved episcopalian expositor, has made the following remarks: “Hence we learn, that the distinction between bishops and presbyters was not then generally established; but that the pastors of the church were distinguished from the deacons, who managed the secular matters and the charities of the church. Much labour and learning have, indeed, been employed to set aside this conclusion, but with little success, even by the allowance of decided episcopalians.” And hence it appears, that New Testament bishops, elders, or pastors, were so designated because of their Christian ministration among a particular people; their connexion with the people of their charge over whom they presided, and among whom they ministered, alone giving utility to their office. The term bishop, therefore, as used by the *inspired writers*, has no more to do with those lordly men, that go by that name in this country, than it has with the Pope of Rome, the Lama of Thibet, or the Brahmin of India. Accordingly, it has generally been found, that when episcopalians are pressed upon this point, finding that scriptural authority fails them, they have recourse to that ever mutable standard of conduct, *expediency*. Paley, with the sophistry of a special pleader, has recourse to this alone, when he would find out a support for diocesan-episcopacy; and sorry am I to find, that even Scott has given something like a sanction to this kind of plea in its favour, when, after asserting in his note on 1 Tim. v. 21, 22, that we can by no means infer the *divine right* of episcopacy, from the authority exercised by Timothy and Titus, or other evangelists, he adds, that “it is probable that it was very early found *expedient*, and conducive to peace, to have a stated presiding inspector, of approved wisdom and piety.” And this was the most modest manner in which he could possibly suggest a plea, for any thing bearing the smallest resemblance to the episcopacy of the Churches of Rome or England. But if it be *expedient* to deviate from scriptural models and examples, in one case, or under one class of circumstances, why not so in a thousand cases and circumstances, and when once the doctrine is admitted, where will its influence end? It evidently beclouds the conscience, by shutting out the light of truth; not only sanctions, but renders necessary, a disregard to the monitions of the one, and the authority of the other; sets aside the distinctions between right and wrong, virtue and vice, holiness and sin; and when once these distinctions are set aside, by what laws, I ask, is any church to be governed, or by what bonds is any society to be held together? We have seen the pernicious influence of this doctrine in the history of the church: it was this, and this alone, that prepared the way for the elevation of bishops of churches into those of districts, and then of a country or empire, until all were merged in subjection to one—the Pope of Rome—the “man of sin:” and it is by the admission and maintenance of this doctrine only, that

our country exhibits such a perfectly anti-scriptural hierarchy, formed solely upon the model of the Roman Catholic, only putting the King of England in the place of the Pope of Rome, bringing their Graces the Archbishops, and their Lordships the Bishops, peers of the realm, instead of Christian overseers or pastors, with all their *worshipful* retinue, by names almost innumerable, into subjection to the king, instead of the Pope, leaving *him* to settle "rites and ceremonies," things neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture, and to command his subjects to observe them; yea, and even to do more than the Pope ever did, to have one "form of common prayer," and orders of management, in all the minute parts of ministerial duty, (as we shall presently prove to you,) and to enforce the "uniformity" of the observance of these, by enactments and proceedings which, as we have seen, were a disgrace to humanity, and which must remain an everlasting stain, and a perpetual reproach to such a kind of religious profession. (See the 37th Article, and the first 12 Canons of the Book of Common Prayer.)

And where shall we find, in the New Testament, what are called priests in your church—a distinct order of ecclesiastical personages? Perhaps you have never been informed before, that no such designation is given to any by the inspired writers, except the priesthood of the Old Testament Economy—the "great Apostle and High-priest of our profession," and all his followers, *without distinction*, who are expressly called "a chosen generation—a royal priesthood," &c. (1 Peter ii. 9.) One Christian, therefore, is as much of a priest as another, to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, in the faith of the great propitiatory Sacrifice, once made in the end of the world for sin. Possibly this statement may fall under the class of "latitudinarian ideas," which you think are "so dangerous as to form an excuse for refusing obedience to the church, and which, when acted on, constitute a man his own priest and temple;" but whether it be "latitudinarian," or rectilinear, judge ye. Peter designates all Christians "a royal priesthood," and Paul calls them a temple; for "ye," says he, "are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. vi. 16.) And upon this passage an eloquent writer has observed, "What purity, sanctity, and dignity may be expected in persons who bear such a character! A Christian should look upon himself as something sacred and devoted; so that what involves but an ordinary degree of criminality in others, in him partakes of the nature of sacrilege; what is a breach of trust in others, is in him the profanation of a temple."

But then come deacons,—and these, in your Church, form another order of spiritual or ecclesiastical personages, who, upon their assumption of this office, declare they trust "they are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon them this office and ministration to serve God, for the promoting of his glory, and the edifying of his people;" and that they are duly called, according to "the order of this realm, to the ministry of the Church;" and in the 19th page of your letter, you refer to a controversy respecting the first appointment of deacons, as if vested only in the pastors of the Church, and not in the people in connexion with their pastors: an impartial re-perusal of the passage will probably set this matter at rest. (See 6th chapter of the Acts.) But what was their office? *Undeniably* to collect money for the service of the tables, for the relief of the poor, and the support of the ministry; and these collections were not to be *forced*, but *voluntary*, (not like the unrighteous

systems of poor and church rates, and *tithe* collections of your Church,) —and this almost exclusively secular office is still needed, and therefore is and ought to be continued in the Christian church, though your Church recognizes and cares nothing about *such* deacons. (See 1 Tim. iii. 8—13.)

Thus, then, by a varied and lengthened induction of particulars, I have proved that the true Christian church consists of “a congregation of faithful men,” called together by the ministration of the word and Spirit of God; a perfectly voluntary association; invested with peculiar privileges by Him to whom alone they feel themselves supremely bound to submit their understandings and consciences; especially, under his direction, to elect their own officers, whether for the superintendence of their spiritual or secular concerns, as a body of people united together in virtue of their union to Christ, their ever-living Head;* and, consequently, that all their efforts and contributions for the support, usefulness, and influence of this society, are “free-will offerings, as unto the Lord, and not unto men.” And these particulars, which will be of necessity yet farther drawn out, are so obviously drawn from the highest authority, that not a vestige of ground is left for the support of your hierarchy upon this authority; all its ecclesiastical and secular appointments being found the darling offspring of expediency, not of divine utility or truth. No wonder, then, that the “sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” has always been an object of terror, if not of abhorrence, to the Romanists and Episcopalians, at least, an object which they gladly would keep out of the pews as well as the pulpit, from the period of their establishment to the present hour. “*Our church*,” “*our excellent liturgy*,” “*our articles*,” and “*our canons*,” and “*our*” every thing, but the Bible, form the continual grounds of your clergymen’s appeal for almost every thing they exhort, enjoin, or command their hearers to regard; (and whatever accords not with this kind of preachment, the thirty-second page of your Letter tells me is not gospel;) and hence the opposition that has been raised by one part of your clergy against the Bible Society; and the unkind usage, (to use the softest terms,) to which another part of your clergy have been subjected for giving that Society their support; and the fear which even *both classes* have sometimes manifested, lest the Prayer Book should not be as extensively circulated as the Bible; the Bible exposing the anomalies of the Prayer Book, and thus endangering the membership of the Establishment.

Yes, Sir, and it is the Bible that convinces me of the inutility of prayer books, when “the spirit of grace and supplication” is poured out. The history of their origin will be found a sufficient warrant for the indulgence of that conviction. Not the least intimation of the use of any such helps is to be found in the New Testament. The question raised concerning “our Lord’s Prayer,” has, I believe, been completely set at rest, by the united testimony of learned and pious divines, both in and out of the Establishment; so that none, except such as may be incapable of receiving a rational and impartial conviction upon the subject, will now venture to assert, that it is any thing more than a “model or directory, pointing out the principal heads or subjects proper for prayer;”

* See Acts i. 15 to 26; also Acts, chap. vi.; chap. xv. ver. 22; Hebrews, chap. ii. ver. 1; chap. x. ver. 21 to 25; and 1 John iv. 1. “One inspector or bishop,” says Mosheim, “presided over each assembly, to which office he was elected by the voice of the whole people.”

and therefore, in no sense of the words, *an obligatory form*. There is not a single prayer presented to our notice, on the whole inspired record, except such as were connected with the *ceremonial institutions* of the Jewish economy, which did not arise out of the circumstances under which it was originally uttered, and was not, therefore, *perfectly extemporaneous*. The petitions which that record suggests for prayer; the varied exhortations which it presents to its exercise; the corrections it offers against its abuse; the promises it affords of assistance and success; and all the blessings it announces as given in answer to prayer, are all unanswerable proofs, that liturgies, or forms of prayer, did not exist in the purest periods of the history of the church, and are, therefore, not indispensably necessary now. Tertullian, who lived about the beginning of the third century, says, "We Christians pray with our hands expanded, because they are the hands of innocence; with our heads uncovered, because we are not ashamed; and without any prompter, because *our prayers are from the heart*." No trace is to be found of an acknowledged precomposed form of prayer, until the third council of Carthage met, A. D. 397, when it was ordained, "that whosoever copies out prayers for himself, from any other persons' composition, shall not use them, till he has first taken upon him the advice of better furnished brethren." From the third century, however, it has been clearly ascertained, there was a gradual falling away of the spirit and power of religion. "The simplicity of primitive Christianity was overwhelmed by a host of ceremonies, borrowed from Judaism or heathenism. The body of the clergy was, in a great measure, sunk into worldliness, ambitious pomp, and arrogant assumption, while their growth in ignorance kept pace with their elevation to secular dignity; and already, many of the gross corruptions of anti-christianism had obtained a firm and extensive establishment."* On these accounts it was, that assistance, by written forms of prayer, became necessary;—the better informed, and probably more pious, helping the more ignorant and worldly-minded, who had either thrust themselves, or been thrust by others, into the ministerial office, for a temporal subsistence or distinction. From the multiplicity of these, which in process of time got into circulation, selections were afterwards made, and, "partly by artifices, and partly by compulsion, those missals (so called from the pre-eminence which was attributed to the celebration of the mass) which were sanctioned by the See of Rome, and which recognized its usurpations, were brought into general establishment throughout the western nations of Europe." During the darkest ages of popery, however, in this country, there were a variety of forms of prayer in use, particularly those of Sarum, York, Hereford, Bangor, and Lincoln. From these *varied forms, which the Church of Rome saw no evil in allowing*, the Prayer Book of the Church of England was originally formed. Out of these the morning and evening services, nearly as now used, except the absolution and the litany, were also compiled, and such things only introduced as were consistent with the Protestant faith; the compilers probably considering it necessary to retain as much as possible of the old forms; that, on the one hand, they might not give offence to the new Pope, in the person of the King, under

* See a valuable discourse "On the comparative advantages of Prescribed Forms and of Free Prayer," by the Rev. Dr. J. P. Smith; whose character and productions will always be venerated by those who believe that truth needs an advocate, and piety a commendation, in this erratic and sinful world.

whom they served ; and that on the other, they might not impede the progress of the cause they intended to serve among the people, —the Reformation from popery. The Reformers, however, never intended that things should continue, either in the Church or Prayer Book, as they then made them out ; but they felt they were under the necessity of submitting to powers they could not control. Hence the learned Bullinger, when writing to the exiles at Frankfort, says, that “ the Archbishop,” meaning Cranmer, “ had drawn up a book of prayers, a hundred times more perfect than that which was then in being, (though it had been twice reformed,) but that the same could not take place, for that he was watched with such a wicked clergy and convocation, and other enemies.” And, in consequence of the adoption of this liturgy, the people were easily and extensively brought over to the *kind of Reformation* then accomplished ; and numbers, even of the Roman Catholics, conformed to the Establishment. “ Even the Pope intimated his willingness to sanction the Anglican liturgy, and the administration of the Lord’s Supper in both kinds, provided the queen (Elizabeth) would acknowledge his supremacy.” But, surely, no oversight could have been more culpable, nor any evil proved to be more pernicious in its results, than the imposition of *one* form of prayer, and *one* series of articles of religion, to which all the clergy were compelled to swear their approval, without admitting a variation in any degree, or allowing the smallest scope to ministerial discretion, or the rights of conscience. Almost every body knows, that knows any thing at all of the matter, that this same Prayer Book underwent very little variation on the restoration of Charles the Second, except the introduction of some more exceptionable services, than it had before ; and that then the universal use of it was enforced by the heaviest penalties, to the eternal infamy of that despiser of every thing true and righteous—and all the minions of his tyranny—the Archbishops, Bishops, and Clergy, one of whom declared him to be “ the breath of their nostrils.”

That a form of prayer was, at the time of its imposition, necessary, cannot be doubted. Not one clergyman in ten was then even tolerably qualified for his office ; preaching was not to be had, except on some few favoured spots ; and, therefore, if there had been no Prayer Book, there would have been no prayer at all ! And the same reasons may probably be urged now ; though they may not be so extensively applicable, for the continued use of the Prayer Book. Thousands of the clergy are well known to be as incompetent, or perhaps I ought to say, as unscripturally qualified, for their stations now, as any were in the reigns of Charles, Elizabeth, or Henry. They have no more aptitude to teach, even by the *composition* of a sermon, than they have to measure the sands, or count the stars, or point out the influences by which they are governed. And as to prayer, alas ! they are as ignorant of the true letter and spirit of it, as if no such things were to be known or felt, in order to the exemplification of Christian character. And if any humble, pious, Bible-Christian were to ask them to pray without a book “ duly authorized,” they would laugh at him for a fool, or abuse him for a methodist or fanatic ! Whole swarms of these men-made clergymen, fresh from those hives of vice and profaneness, as well as literature and conformity, Oxford and Cambridge, are to be found in every part of the country ; and I much question, whether we need travel five and twenty miles from the spot where I now write, to find some of these men, as consummately ignorant of the Scriptures, which they have sworn to teach

the people, as they are consummately insolent in their treatment of Dissenters; and who yet know not how to "pray either in the Spirit or with the understanding," for themselves or others; and who do, therefore, cut themselves off from the only source and the only means whereby their personal benefit, or their relative usefulness, might be promoted. Possibly, it may be argued by some, that the same kind of preparation or character is not necessary for the "*state*," as may be required in the *Christian* religion; but sure I am, that Christianity, in its influence, or as a preparatory direction for their work, has as little to do with these men, as the Koran, the Shaster, or the leaves of the Sibyl; and well may the people among whom they officiate, exercising their inalienable right, "to try the spirits whether they be of God," by the authoritative standard of truth and duty for all—say, "Jesus we know, and Paul we know, but who are ye?" And if such men are to be allowed to continue "in the Church," which of course they would always wish to do for the sake of "the livings" into which they have been inducted, either by "gifts," or "influence," or "purchase," what would they do without a Prayer Book? And as the original and successive generations of these conformists, have been but too extensively found of this character, among the higher as well as the *lower orders* of the clergy, can we wonder that the Prayer Book has never undergone any revision, since the days of the tyrant Charles, nor a single movement ever been made towards the accomplishment, of what might surely be deemed a desirable object, if it were only to reduce the number of dissentients from the Establishment?

Most cheerfully, however, do we concede, that the Prayer Book of the Church of England has very many, and those very distinguishing, excellencies. On its first appearance, it was the "most important and valuable" that had ever been used; and the evangelical purity and sublime devotion of many of its compositions, must always be interesting and useful; but, after all that can be said in its favour, it must be acknowledged, that *it is only a human composition*, and therefore capable of being rivalled and excelled. But the exceptions we take, are numerous and weighty; its defects are more than an overbalance for its excellencies: it is unscriptural, presumptuous, and contradictory in many of its parts; and, above all, to be objected to, because of its arbitrary imposition, and demanded uniformity of use; as if it were unparalleled in its excellencies, and infallible in all its directions. As a Dissenter, from very early and continued investigation and conviction, as well as family bias and connexion, I have often been painfully annoyed by the irreconcilable anomalies observable in your professedly *reformed* service. To say nothing of the surplice, as a purely papistical relic, which must be worn during the reading of the prayers, and laid aside when the ministration of the word is to take place, I could never account for the use of the old translation of the Psalms, and some parts even of the other Scriptures, in preference to our more modern and authorized translations of them. The standings up and sittings down in the different responses; the performance of one part of the service in one place, and another somewhere else; the use of a second creed, when the first is pronounced to be *apostolic*; the bowings, turnings, kneelings, and remembrances at once of the true God, and his Son Jesus Christ, and *creatures*, as if on an equality with, though at an infinite remove from, both; the repetitions, endings and beginnings, and beginnings and endings again, which serve most unnecessarily to

lengthen out the preliminary service, for, after all, it is but a *preliminary* service; and if any regard is to be had to the authority of Christ, *only subservient*—to an obediential compliance with his command—to preach the kingdom of God—the reign of heaven upon earth; all which, in my view at least, is not merely wearisome to the flesh, but has a direct tendency to promote a spirit of formality, not to be overcome, on some occasions, even by the most spiritual worshippers. All these objections, however, I find have been urged, in much stronger language than any that I might use, from their more intimate acquaintance with your forms, by pious clergymen of your own Church. Thus the Rev. Robert Cox, a perpetual curate in the north of Devon, writes, “The Lord’s Prayer is necessarily repeated, every Sunday morning, *five times*; on sacramental-days, six; and, should the services for baptism and the churching of women occur, (both of which are appointed to be read during public worship,) the same prayer will be repeated not less than *eight times*, in the course of one continued service! By the same appointment, *two* distinct prayers are offered up for the king, *two* creeds are recited, the collect for the day is *twice* read, the Gloria Patri is *eight*, and occasionally *ten*, times repeated; and, if we take into the account the comprehensive prayer for the church militant, and the various versicles interspersed throughout the service, there is scarcely a petition for any blessing, or a prayer for any work, office, or condition of man, which is not reiterated!” How contrary is this to the simple, heartfelt, extemporaneous prayers recorded in the Scriptures, with a view at once to furnish us with matter and language, as well as encouragement in prayer! How opposite to the exhortation of our Lord in reference to prayer: “When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, *as the heathen do*, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking!” And how ill adapted must this necessarily be, not only to the ever-fluctuating states, and circumstances, and experience of Christian worshippers, which *all public* as well as *private* prayer should be adapted to meet and make known, but also to the suitable and devout elevation of the heart to a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering God! But still stronger objections than these have been urged, by a more powerful pleader for the introduction of the unadulterated institutions of Christianity within the pale of your Church, by the Rev. John Riland, whose work I have already commended to your notice. “What,” says he, “do we gain by the party spirit of the preface to the Liturgy; the ill selections of proper lessons, epistles, and gospels; the retention of legendary names and allusions in the calender; the lection of the Apocrypha, and the omission of the Apocalypse;* the mention of feasts and fasts never observed; the repetition of the Paternoster,† Kyrie Eleison, and Gloria Patri; the wearisome length of the services; the redundancy and assumptions in the state prayers; the unsatisfactoriness of the three creeds; the disputable character of the baptismal and burial offices; the incompleteness and dubious construction of the catechism and of the order of confirmation; the inapplicable nature and absolution of the visitation of the sick; the imperfection of the commination service; the discordance between the Prayer Book and Bible translation of the Psalms; the contumelious and offensive language of the

* Was it on account of its exposure of the blasphemies, abominations, and desolations of every anti-christian power or tyranny, that the Book of the Revelations has been so carefully shut out of the hearing of the members of the Establishment?

state services;* and, added to all these sources of weakness, similar causes of inefficiency in the Articles and Homilies?" What more forcible or concise enumeration of the glaring defects of the Prayer Book, could possibly be given by any dissident from the Establishment? But, remember, that this is given by a conformist; a man who was once required to swear his "unfeigned assent and consent" to this very book; and who now, as a clergyman, reads it every Sabbath-day! There is, however, one other general objection, which, I confess, I should have been ashamed to notice, if I could not have met some allusion to it by others, which would help me to give it a sufficiently forcible expression: "There are low scenes in Shakspeare," it has been said, "and jocose chapters in the Waverley Novels, which would be eminently pure and edifying, if addressed to a Christian congregation, when compared with the nauseous gabble which a clergyman is required to read, as a first lesson, for the evening service of the thirtieth of September." I need not, perhaps, remind you, that the allusion here is to the Apocryphal lessons, which surely no other than a corrupt church would ever have admitted into its "orders." But enough has been said of a *general* character upon these matters: let us now descend to particulars.

Let us take up your "Apostolic Creed." And let me remind you at once, that it is a mere assumption to call it "Apostolic," it was the production of men who lived ages after the Apostles had been "gathered to their fathers," and whose names are now lost in oblivion: The only reason which Dr. Barrow assigns for its being called Apostolic is, "because the Roman church styled itself Apostolic, and, consequently, every thing which issued from it, Apostolical also." The creed itself was not all composed at once, but, as Mosheim states, "from small beginnings, has imperceptibly augmented, in proportion to the growth of heresy, and according to the exigencies and circumstances of the church, from which it was designed to banish the errors that daily arose." And if this were, as it probably was, the design of its formation, the subsequent history of the church proves that it was never answered; and, consequently, that truth is best left to find its own way and standing in the world. The whole creed is what may be called a doctrinal creed, and yet exceedingly defective even in such a view. It states part of the truth, but not the whole truth. We look in vain into that creed, for the least intimation of the design of Christ's appearance in our world, or of the mission of the Holy Spirit, or what it is that renders both necessary for sinful man; for any mention of the great doctrine of Christianity; justification by faith, through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ our Lord; of the need or evidences of our faith in it; or for any thing else connected with the formation and development of Christian character, and, consequently, our preparation for the "life everlasting;" and yet these are points inculcated upon us, in every part of inspired truth; and absolutely necessary to be experimentally known by us for the enjoyment of final blessedness: why, therefore, were they not introduced, in some way or other, into this creed—if it be of so much

* "Are not the services for 'King Charles the Martyr,' and for the Restoration of the Royal Family, a solemn burlesque; and do they not contain several blasphemous perversions of Holy Scripture?"

importance to be repeated within, and printed upon the walls of your Church? But I maintain, that it is not only remarkable for what it has not of truth, but what it has of error. It says, referring to Christ, meaning his human nature, that he was “conceived by the Holy Ghost.” This, it is true, was an ancient interpolation; the original copies of the creed reading, either, “who was born by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary;” or “of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary:” understanding by the word *born*, not only the nativity, but also the conception. And Bishop Pearson makes this remarkable declaration upon the article, “For though Christ was conceived by the Holy Ghost, *yet the Holy Ghost did not conceive him*, but said unto the Virgin, thou shalt conceive.” If you call the error a grammatical one,—it is still an error, in which you profess your *belief*, solemnly and continually; and one which, if language have any definite meaning, involves a natural impossibility. I believe in the miraculous conception of the human nature of Christ, as firmly as any believer in the Bible can; but, of course, a conception by the Virgin, and not a conception by the Holy Ghost; and if you turn to the first chapters of St. Matthew’s and St. Luke’s gospels, you will find my statement correct, and your creed wrong; for, “the angel said unto Mary, Behold, thou shalt conceive,” &c. Again:—Did Christ descend into hell? This is another article of your creed, interpolated about the fourth century. At its adoption we are told, that “it was propounded with various explication;” and a reference was made to the 1st Peter iii. 19, as the authority on which it rested; but this explication and reference being suppressed in the reign of Elizabeth, a greater latitude of discussion was allowed, to find out its true meaning. But, in the year 1560, we are told the controversy respecting it ran so high, “that several of our bishops were for ruining those who would not hold, that Christ went into the hell of the damned.” Whether it was an article thrown into your creed, to support the doctrine of a purgatorial punishment after death, or of an ultimately universal restoration, I know not; but that it was deemed necessary to support a something in your Church, and may be wrapped up in mystery among yourselves, seems evident from the third and eighth articles of your Church-book. But the word hell, it is undeniable, is sometimes used, by the inspired writers, to denote simply the invisible world; in its common acceptation, however, it is used to denote the “place of the damned;” and in this sense, we are taught to believe it was used in this article of your creed;—but upon what authority? *Not of Scripture*; for Peter most plainly refers to the Spirit, and not to Christ, in the passage referred to; the Spirit, by which Noah was influenced, in common with other preachers of righteousness, under the former dispensations of religion, when preaching to those, who in their days were in the bondage of corruption, and who now are “spirits in prison,” reserved in darkness unto the judgment of the great day. And the evangelist tells us, that our Lord said unto the thief upon the cross, “To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise;” and if by paradise was to be understood, “the place of the damned,” then what a deception must our Lord have practised upon the poor thief, under circumstances which, of all others, urged its avoidance. But if, on the contrary, he meant, as I believe he did, the abodes of the blessed—where the spirits of just men made perfect are found, then what a failure is there in your creed! Alas! if truth had not a better sup-

port than this "creed" gives it, it would soon perish from the earth! There is also another article, concerning "the forgiveness of sins," which will properly come under our examination of the

Nicene Creed. This Creed was composed in the fourth century; and, according to Bishop Usher, was as confidently, and more anciently called, the Apostles' Creed, than that to which we have just referred. It seems, therefore, that more ancient worthies than the compilers of your Prayer Book, considered *this* worthy of a *first*, instead of a *second rate* importance; and it certainly does not contain any articles so entirely exceptionable, as those of its kindred form. It was designed to check the Arian heresy, which then began to make very formidable inroads upon the *orthodoxy*, as the alliance between "church and state" had been making upon the *spirituality* of the Church. But though it was agreed to at a council of three hundred and eighteen bishops, says Hooker, "the *Arians* who were present subscribed to it also; not that they meant sincerely and indeed to forsake their error, but only to escape deprivation and exile, which they saw they could not avoid; openly persisting in their former opinions, when the greater part had concluded against them, and that with the Emperor's royal assent!" O! how fully does this statement of facts demonstrate the inefficiency of creeds, even though imposed by bishops and royal edicts, to maintain an unity of faith among professedly Christian men! Reserving our observations upon the definitions of the Sonship of Christ, given in this creed, for an union with those we shall offer upon the Athanasian creed, both bidding defiance to the power of intellect to comprehend, we need only here observe, that the acknowledgment "of one baptism for the remission of sins" in this creed, and the article, "the forgiveness of sins," in the former creed, "are susceptible of a dangerous latitude of interpretation; since it may justly be suspected, from the required repetition of the creed by the person baptized, and the exalted epithets bestowed by the Latin fathers upon the ordinance of baptism, it supports the notions of a sacramental virtue inherent in the rite itself, and a ministerial power residing in the Church, for the forgiveness of sins, the traces of which are found in the offices of the Church of England."*

"The Athanasian Creed" is now, I believe, generally disapproved, by the most enlightened members of your Church; and even by the clergy, who are called upon "by authority," to read it thirteen times every year. It is attributed to Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, who flourished about the fourth century, probably because he was most violent against Arianism, and resolute in his determination, not to restore Arius to his rank, from which he had been deposed in the church; but Burnet tells us, that it was not compiled till nearly three ages after him. So much for the authority of its name. But it is of little consequence, to determine who was its author;—the most important question being, of what utility is the imposition of such a compilation, as a creed? It is, without dispute, a presumptuous attempt to make people comprehend, what is incomprehensible; to explain, what is inexplicable; to define, what admits not of a definition: and then it has the "auda-

* See Mr. Conder's valuable work on "Nonconformity:" a work which, for the simplicity, and cogency, and scriptural authority of all its reasonings, as well as the variety and extent of the information it conveys, cannot be too strongly commended to the careful perusal of all classes of professing Christians.

city to declare," that unless a man believes what it sets forth as true,— "the Catholic faith,"—he shall, "without doubt, perish everlastingly." No wonder that Chillingworth should have felt this a difficulty in the way of his subscription; "for to say nothing," to use his own words, "of other things, which I have so well considered, as not to be in a state to sign them, and yet not so well as to declare myself against them; the damning sentences in St. Athanasius's Creed, (as we are made to subscribe it,) are most false; and also in a high degree presumptuous and schismatical." Ah! had truth ever needed such a support, we should never have heard Him who was the "truth," who had truth itself embodied in his person, who could not, therefore, deviate from it in any of his declarations, or expositions of truth, say, "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him;" not that he would thereby encourage a speaking against himself, much less the denial of the divinity of his character, and the authority of his claims; but that he would proclaim his readiness to forgive even such transgressors, and set an example to all who professed themselves his followers, not to condemn those whom he had not condemned. Besides, as expositions of faith, designed for popular use, of course, their simplicity, their adaptation to convey, in "words easy to be understood," the truths to be believed, should be their highest commendation; but is this the case with either of the creeds which have now passed in review before us? On the contrary, has not each in succession, become more obscure and unintelligible than the former? So that if the question were put to any man of plain understanding, What idea do you affix to these matters? we might fairly expect, that the answer would be given in the manner of the countryman, who, in reply to a similar inquiry, answered, "that he believed what the Church believed;" and on being asked what the Church believed, answered, "that the Church believed what he believed;" and on being pressed still farther, as to what both the Church and he believed, could only reply, that "the Church and he believed the same thing!"

But we must now advance to the consideration of the Baptismal Service, upon which, I am sorry to find by your Letter, that your views are as obscure and perplexed as ever. "Some good people," you say, "will not believe that water can be made effectual to the mystical washing away of sin," and "expect that the Almighty, because he has the power, actually will have direct communication with them, personally and bodily as individuals, instead of with them spiritually;" and, farther, "Baptism is a condition of salvation, therefore the great fundamental article of the gospel is that of faith," &c. Now you must excuse me, Sir, if I say, that had the compiler of that mystical creed, to which I have just referred, been at your elbow when you composed your observations upon baptism, on the 24th and 25th pages of your Letter, you could not, under *his* dictation, have put together any thing so nearly rivaling his own mysterious explanations of intelligible facts. By the term "mystical," it is evident you would have us understand, not a sign of a thing signified, but something inwrought and "effectual," and that this "mystical" and "effectual" agency, has to do somehow with individuals, "not personally," but "spiritually," as if the soul of man, and the spiritual condition of his soul, had nothing to do with *him* individually or personally! But really I must leave it to you, or your metaphysical coadjutors, to explain what, to a plain matter of fact man, like myself, is really inexplicable.

And yet you say, moreover, "baptism is a condition of salvation : " but in what part of the New Testament is it so inculcated or set forth ? that it is an initiatory and allusive ordinance of the Christian church, and nothing more, I have already, in my former Letter, endeavoured to prove : it was for you, therefore, to disprove what I therein advanced, rather than to reassert what you had asserted before ; but the conclusion to be drawn from your own theory is completely subversive of all your pleas in favour of infant baptism ; and if you give up what appears to me, after a very lengthened and mature investigation, the authority of Scripture upon that point, I wish the self-named baptists all the joy which such an accession to their members can possibly give them ; for if faith be essential to baptism, then of course, an infant cannot exercise it, and therefore, upon your own theory, an infant ought not to be baptized. But I deny the truth of your position, and the conclusion deducible from it together. And I feel fully persuaded in my own mind, that any unsophisticated Christian, with the Bible in his hand, who has known nothing at all of that "orthodox Church," as you call it, nor any of the mystical absurdities which have sprung up and been propagated as truth, in the midst of her, would have given an infinitely more correct description of baptism, and regeneration too, than you have given, or than your "orthodox Church" has enabled you to give. I speak thus firmly, it may be even satirically, because "baptismal regeneration" is the well-known dogma of your Church ; and of this a certain curate, living not many furlongs from both of our residences, when I was speaking to him upon the subject, was "fully assured ;" but,—*mirabile dictu*,—not because he found it in the New Testament, but in the Prayer Book ! and therefore, with his usually emphatic manner, lifting up his hands and closing his eyes, he said, "In some sense or other, children must be regenerated by baptism, for our baptismal service, which in common with all our minor services is *most excellent*, expressly teaches us "to yield most hearty thanks to our most merciful Father, that it has pleased him to regenerate the infant with his Holy Spirit;" but though he maintained this language as true, and I would not have referred to him if I had not suspected that he has had something to do with your Letter, I cannot but in common fairness add, that he assured me, he "always insisted on the evidences of regeneration, as essential to Christian character." But let us examine this matter a little.

By regeneration, I apprehend, we must understand, not a change in the outward or relative condition merely, but such a change in the state of the mind, (*μετανοια*) its principles, motives, preferences, and habitual character, as to warrant the distinctive appellations given of it, by the inspired writers ; such as "a right spirit," "a heart of flesh," "born again," "begotten through the gospel," "renewed in the spirit of the mind," "created anew," "new creatures in Christ Jesus," &c.,—language which shows at once the decisive character and excellency of the change, and the divine power which is used and is necessary to bring it about. Of course it must be believed, that this is the change which your Church contemplates in that form of words, above quoted ; and which is used in her baptismal service. But is it true, that such a change is brought about in the state and character of the infants baptized within her pale ? O ! what a happy state of society should we have, if this were really the case ! All the untold millions of children that are baptized by your clergy, and are

duly registered in your church-books, would all be regenerate souls, and, *therefore, would not sin as others sin*; for the apostle tells us, that “*whosoever is born of God, does not commit sin,*”—i. e. with the full consent and unrestrained bias of his soul; *nor despise and reject the Saviour as others do*; for the same apostle tells us, that “*whosoever is born of God, believeth that Jesus is the Christ;*” *nor would their minds be absorbed in the world*; for the same apostle tells us, “*whosoever is born of God overcometh the world,*”—i. e. rises above its polluting and soul-destroying influence; and, consequently, the whole moral aspect of those, at least, who have shared in your church baptism, would be changed; and instead of having to deplore increasing juvenile delinquency, or more matured life of unbelief and sin, we should have to rejoice in the almost universal return of the reign of heaven amongst us. But, alas! what do facts—multiplying and undeniable facts, testify concerning this matter?—*that there is not a word of truth in it!*—that those who are brought up after the strictest forms of your Church, have not only unhallowed tendencies and perverseness of mind fully commensurate with others,—but *are taught to acknowledge impossibilities* as it regards their sponsors, and errors, as it regards their creeds and catechism;—and are trained to equivocation, falsehood, and perjury, as it regards all connected with their legal or official conformity to that Church; while those who are otherwise brought up, and only for the ordinary purposes of life, a full measure of insensibility to every thing sacred and divine; an excessive love of the world, which the attractions of the great and the wealthy, and the influential, united with the splendours of “*a worldly sanctuary,*” tend most directly to foster and support, and become the greatest impediments in the way of the exercise of faith: for “*how can ye believe,*” said our Lord, “*who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?*”—The habits of sabbath-breaking, which the “*book of sports*” formerly, and the bishops pleading in the House of Lords for the partial keeping open of public-houses in the present day, tend to sanction; profaneness, which the unrighteous multiplication of oaths, sanctioned by your Church, or its representatives in our legislature, encourages; gambling, swindling, fornication, adultery, and those thousand indecences which result from such indecent ways, are found to prevail and abound among them;—to all which may be added, the crimes of the lower classes of society, all of whom are sought after, if they do not voluntarily come forward, to have their children baptized, according to the form of your Prayer Book. And though this representation of the “*baptized*” of your Church may appear strong, yet it could easily be made still stronger; and even then, the challenge be given to you, or to any even of the dignitaries of your Church, to come forward, and prove that these are not facts; or that those who are baptized, within the pale of your Church, are still “*regenerate*”—“*born again*”—“*new creatures*”—though these facts are evidently true concerning them!

Nor is this all to be complained of concerning this service. Nature teaches us, that the proper guardians of children’s spiritual training are their parents, or nearest of kin, in the event of the decease of their parents; and revelation aids the dictates of nature, and calls upon parents “*to train up their children in the way they should go;*”—“*to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord;*”—and not to throw impediments in the way of their improvement, lest they “*be discouraged*” in seeking it:—but what does that perfectly iniquitous

code of laws, called the "canons" of your Church, prescribe upon this point?—Even this: "that no parent shall be urged to be present, nor be admitted to answer as godfather for his own child; nor be suffered to make any other answer, or speech, than by the Book of Common Prayer is prescribed in that behalf," &c. Here, then, your "orthodox church" teaches, that the primary obligations of parents in reference to their children, are all to be disregarded or violated, in the observance of her forms; that they are to have no more to do with the presentation of their children to the Lord in baptism, than if He had never given them children; and thus being, by the "Church of England," discharged from their obligations, they may, of course, consider themselves at liberty to lay the whole burden of the moral training of their children upon their sponsors: the strongest ties between children and parents, and parents and children, being completely cut asunder! But the iniquity of the details of this transaction "is not yet full." The sponsors, on the behalf of these children, in the most solemn form which a religious service can impose,—a form, which gives it even more than the solemnity of an oath,—are required in the name, and for the child, "to renounce the devil and all his works; the vain pomp and glory of the world; with all *covetous desires* of the same, and the *carnal desires* of the flesh, so that they will not follow, nor be led by them; that they will, for these children, believe *all* the articles of the creed, and obediently keep God's holy will and commandments," &c.; and before confirmation, the time specified for the release of the sponsors from this obligation, the children are taught by their catechism, that they were made by *baptism*, members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven, and that these undertakings were solemnly made by their godfathers, &c., &c. This, perhaps, you will say, proves the consistency of the service; ah! but at the same time, it proves its utter inconsistency even with itself; and its imposition and claimed assumption of a power which no created being can possibly exercise. In vain would it be said, that impossibilities are not required: our appeal is to the obvious and unequivocal import of the language used on the occasion; language, the force of which, neither evasion, nor explanation, can in any way abate. After the children are baptized, you thank God that, by baptism, he has regenerated them *with his Holy Spirit*; of course, this implies that none but the Holy Spirit can regenerate the souls of men; and, consequently, that it is not merely external, or reputed, but scriptural, spiritual regeneration, that is hereby acknowledged; but, before the children have been baptized, your Church requires *the sponsors* to exercise a power over the minds of the children, which comprehends all the essential characteristics of regeneration; in the exercise of faith—of obedience—of an opposition to the powers of darkness, and to "the world which lieth in wickedness;" and, lest any should assume that the regenerative power of their sponsors is limited, even in these developments of spiritual principles, their power is required to extend even to the covetous and carnal desires of these children; and as the *desires*, or *affections*, form the key to the guidance of the whole conduct, of course, these sponsors must change the whole character of these children: but where is the created being who *can* accomplish this? Such a power is not given to angels, much less to men; the moral government of God, and the responsibility of his creatures forbid it; and, therefore, the imposition and assumption of such a power, is *the greatest absurdity, and the*

most daring impiety. God is jealous of his own honour ; and neither in this, nor any other matter connected with the salvation of the souls of his creatures, will he give his glory unto another.

Nor is "the iniquity of the Amorites yet full." Children everywhere abound ; and not unfrequently, the poor, who have no friends, have more children than the rich, who have many friends. It is difficult for them, therefore, sometimes to get sponsors for their children ; and if they did not take them to church to be baptized, the overseer, or magistrate, or clergyman, would, perhaps, call upon and scold them ; or threaten them with the withdrawal of any little assistance they may have from the parish,* or with the withholding of Christian burial in their "consecrated ground," in the event of the decease of their children,† not having been made good Church-of-England Christians ; and, therefore, they take them to church ; *but what are they to do for sponsors?* the parents may be refused ; and I well know by whom they have been refused, though his predecessor never did so in this parish ; to whom then are they to apply ? friends they have none : strangers they do not like to ask : then they may go out into the highways, and pick up any two of the greatest barbarians that are to be found in civilized society, who will "stand to do a poor man a kindness !" and though they may never have seen the parents, nor, of course, their children before, nor perhaps from the time they leave the church, the ceremony having been duly performed, may ever see them again, yet these—even these, are admitted as sponsors—not making use of any other speech than that prescribed ; and thus, these poor, ignorant, deluded creatures, unconsciously perjure themselves ! and the clergyman admits, yea, in some cases, even demands **THIS PERJURY !!** Can greater iniquity than this, I ask, be more clearly established by law, or prevail in any other church in the world ? But intimately connected with this, is another ceremony, which, if not so thoroughly iniquitous, is equally characterized by impiety. I mean the

Confirmation Service. I have not been able to ascertain *when* this ceremony was first introduced into the Church ; but I well know, that in common with others, it is pleaded for, on account of its *antiquity* ; as if, because an institution were *ancient*, it must necessarily be *obligatory* ;—a plea which, if admitted, would do well to place the religion of the Hindoos, the Chinese, or the Persians, in the place of the Christian religion, all over the world ; but though, unquestionably, it was an early addition to the simple institutions of Christianity, it was reserved for the "mother of abominations," to make it an independent "sacrament ;" and from thence it was transferred to form a part of what you call "our National Covenant." To review those passages of Scripture, which have been adduced by some, to support a plea for this ceremony, in which the Apostles are spoken of, as laying their hands upon the heads of the disciples of Christ, to convey to them the mira-

* I should like to know, by what "common law"—common fairness—or common honesty, the officers of a parish can dare to withhold from the poor, because they may be Dissenters, any assistance they may need from the poor's rate ; when those rates are levied alike upon Dissenters and Church-men ? Oppressors should know, that the arm of the law is sufficient to restrain such iniquity as this.

† The curate of this parish, "enlightened and liberal," no doubt, has actually refused burial to *two* children within a short period, because they had not been "baptized ; and, therefore, of course, were not *fit* to lay in "consecrated ground."

culous endowments of the Holy Spirit, would be an unnecessary task ; for every plea drawn from such references partakes, in my view, more of *the sin of presumption*, than the mistaken assumptions, to which even good men may be sometimes subject ; and renders those who urge them, the fit associates of those only, who in *these days* claim at once the gifts of miracles and tongues. There is, however, *one* passage, and but *one*, which seems to give the *semblance of a sanction* to a confirmation service, and that is found in Acts xiv. 21, 22 ; but an impartial examination, even of this passage, will prove, that the object of the Apostles' visits to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, was as distinct from your order of confirmation as light is from darkness. The Apostles having been early removed from the churches, they had been instrumental in gathering together in those places, were desirous to return to them, to *confirm or strengthen* them, by re-announcing in their hearing that gospel which they had already received ; that their views of its grand peculiarities might be enlarged, and their stability in its profession promoted ; to enable them to pass through the "great tribulation" which lay in their way to the kingdom of heaven, with consistency and integrity of character. The whole passage most plainly proceeds upon the assumption of the Christian character of these early converts to the Christian faith ; and though this would be a matter of heart-felt gratitude to the Apostles, yet not a syllable is recorded concerning it, nor of their laying their hands upon their heads in token of their confirmation ! Now admitting, for one moment, the possibility of good being done by the bishops of your Church (though their office bears not the smallest affinity to that of the Apostles) occasionally visiting the churches, to strengthen the souls of them "that have believed through grace," as the Apostles did ;—we maintain, that not only is good not done, but *an incalculable measure of evil* does actually result from their occasional progresses to the churches, with the design of what, I believe, is technically termed, "holding a confirmation." But here it may be asked, in what does the *evil* of this service consist ? We reply, in the professed assumption of vows which never have been, and in millions of instances never were intended to be, and which in the very nature of things it was utterly impossible ever could be, fulfilled in the youth that attend "to be confirmed ;" in the reiteration of a certain form of words, concerning their baptism, which are as delusive in their tendency as they are utterly incompatible in themselves with the dictates of truth ; in the assumption, upon the same grounds, of Christian principle, experience, and character, when, if these youth were fairly examined, they would be found as utterly ignorant of these, as they would be, if questioned concerning the Eleusinian mysteries ; all that they are required to do by "the Church," being only to repeat the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, and the Catechism, while the clergymen of the parishes to which they belong, in the majority of instances, do not require even that ; and then, the officiating lord bishop, with all the pomp suited to the occasion, in the view at least of the Church to which he belongs,—clothed in his popish vestments of satin and fine linen, acknowledges before God, "that he *has* regenerated these his servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and has given unto them the forgiveness of all their sins, &c.!" But what hypocrisy—what profaneness—what a direct insult is this, to the great Searcher of hearts ; when neither the lord bishop himself, nor the offi-

ciating clergymen of the respective parishes, from whence these youth are drawn, either perhaps, (for it is a mere *perhaps* if they do,) believe in the doctrines which they here recognise, or, if they do believe them, *have not the shadow of an evidence of the truth of what they affirm!* And what is the result of this? If those who are “confirmed,” reflect at all upon what has transpired, they must go away under the influence of a “strong delusion to believe a lie:”—namely, that they *are Christians*, regenerate and pardoned, and therefore sanctified, *merely* because they have been “baptized and confirmed,” and consequently are admissible to the sacrament: but how obvious is it to the most common observer of the participants in the ceremony, that the majority never seriously reflect upon the matter; that it is to them a kind of church holiday, when they must appear in their “best clothes” before the lord bishop, to be, they know not what, “confirmed;” and when the ceremony is over, as on other feasts of their Church, called Christ-mass, Easter, or Whitsuntide, may drink, dance, and sing, and “run to every excess of riot.” And this, O! wondrous misnomer, even this is supposed to be a *Christian* institution, and, consequently, all its participants are called *Christians*: and if any were to doubt, or be questioned concerning it, they might silence every doubt and inquiry, by a reference to the *prescribed form*, in which the lord bishop has, by the imposition of his hands upon their heads, “certified them of the favour and gracious goodness of God towards them,” &c.; and, consequently, whatever their future conduct may be, neither they for themselves, nor any others, should doubt the genuine stamp of their Christianity! Nor is this a mere picture of my own imagination; millions of witnesses might be summoned to prove it; and that even this *picture* of the ceremony and its influences is not too highly coloured, an extract from a record, which I have by me, will perhaps serve to prove:—“19th October, 1821. Confirmation of male and female malefactors. The Right Reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of London,* held this day a confirmation at the General Penitentiary, Millbank, when 200 prisoners, male and female, were admitted to that solemn rite!! Let not the public wonder at the increase of juvenile delinquency.” No! I add, nor let any wonder, that such profane mockeries of truth, and delusions practised upon undying souls, should have facilitated the spread of infidelity and the increase of crime, by which the judgments of heaven are provoked against us! Men cannot be changed into Christians by the law of the land, nor by the inculcation of baptismal regeneration upon their minds, nor by the imposition of the hand, and acknowledgments of any men, even *Christian men*:---no! a decisive change must be brought about in their state, character, and conduct, under the direction and influence of the Word and Spirit of God; or else they will be found to have neither part nor lot in the “favour and gracious goodness” of God the Father, through Christ the Redeemer, and the Spirit the Sanctifier!

Perhaps in this hasty review of the Prayer Book, a few hints upon the “Matrimonial Service” may not be deemed out of place. This is a “very ancient” invasion of the *civil rights* of the community; a pure

* For an explanation of the absurd and blasphemous titles of these dignitaries of the Church of England, see the “Letter to the Archbishop of York,” by R. M. Beverley, Esq. No less than 30,000 copies of this work were sold in a few months!

relic of the darkest times of popery, with even more than the intolerance which those times exhibited. The state of matrimony, it is most readily conceded, is both honourable and sacred : but it is a contract between two parties, which, when wisely formed, no other parties can have any right to interfere with, except so far as may serve to give it validity as a *civil contract*. In this light it was viewed under the Old Testament economy ; and there is nothing recorded in the New Testament, to set it in any other point of view.* The allusions to it by writers under both dispensations, only serve to set forth the sacred and irrevocable nature of the obligation, and not as having received any additional institutions of a religious nature, to give it validity. And though no truly pious man would wish the contract to be formed, without the recognition and desire of the sanction and blessing of God, yet it is or ought to be left to his option, to determine whether *any*, and what kind of *religious service* shall be connected with it. Hence it has been well observed, that “ of whatever importance marriage may be in its direct and indirect responsibilities, it is not a religious contract, in the sense that renders a service and ceremony in the church necessary.” It was reserved for the Church of Rome—“ the mother of abominations,”—to take even this institution under her control ; and, by giving it a mystical signification, to elevate it into “ a sacrament.” The design of this was, doubtless, at once to increase her revenues, and to aid her unrighteous domination in the world. Even then, however, the celebration of this so called “ sacrament,” was not, until the sixteenth century, deemed necessary to be held in a church, to give it validity. From this circumstance, however, it was carefully transferred by the Church of England into her services as a religious ceremony ; and though *many forms* of its observance were allowed even by “ her mother,” yet *she alone* established an uniformity in her ritual, and rendered the use of any other, in this country, except among the Quakers, contrary to law. And hence your boasted liturgy, having retained such disgusting allusions and “ *sacramental*” forms, (I suppose they must be called,) has, on this account, as well as others, rendered an universal plea against it indispensably necessary. Few, perhaps, may think much of the ceremony when they are married ; but when they are called to attend the marriage of others, *they feel it*. I shall not, however, enter into details, but simply content myself with uttering a protest against it, as a pure relic of popery—a gross imposition upon every man’s mind who desires that his *words* should be an exact expression of his *thoughts*, and an invasion at once of the civil and religious rights of man.†

The Church of England has, after its own manner, aimed to accommodate herself to the varying states of man ; and has, therefore, made a kind of preparation, to meet him in affliction and the near prospect of death ; hence her

“ Order for the visitation of the sick.” It must be acknowledged to be a very important duty to visit the sick ; and those of us who have

* See Genesis ii. 24 ; Genesis xxiv. 1—4, and 61—67 ; Ruth iv. 9—13 ; John ii. 1—11 ; 2 Cor. vi. 4—15 ; Ephes. v. 22—23, and other parallel passages.

† See a very ably written pamphlet upon this subject, entitled “ An Appeal to Dissenters on their Marriage, &c.” by Joshua Wilson, Esq., of the Inner Temple, son of Thomas Wilson, Esq., the well-known and most liberal friend, patron, and supporter of the cause of Christ among Protestant Dissenters, and Treasurer of Highbury College for the education of young men for the work of the ministry.

been officially called upon to engage in its performance, have felt it a duty as *difficult* as it is important, among those who have given no evidence of Christian character before we visited them. Their true state speedily develops itself; they are evidently in darkness, not knowing whither they are going: we state truth—they assent to it; we tell them they are sinners—they acknowledge it; that Christ is the only Saviour—O yes! say they, we believe it; but alas! there wants the anxiety of an awakened conscience—the feeling sense of the necessity of a provided Saviour! We read and we pray, but their insensibility continues! We renew our visits—they are worse; we can ascertain no satisfactory ground of hope concerning them; and alas! they have no well-founded hope for themselves; we retire, and ere we can see them again, the sun of their earthly existence has set in darkness! O! how gladly would we have hailed the dawns of spiritual light and life, and rejoiced over them as souls saved from death; but we could not! here's the difficulty of the case. But "your Church" gets over this, and a thousand other difficulties connected with Christian or ministerial conduct, with a kind of talismanic promptitude, rivalled only by her "mother," the Church of Rome. No sooner are her clergy sent for, than they, it may be, go; and whether the individual whom they are called to visit, be a believer or an infidel—an upright man, or a downright rogue, they have their "order;" and after having read it in the hearing of the "sick man," they turn their creed into questions, and then very kindly *prescribe* that the sick man shall say, "All this I steadfastly believe;" then a little discretionary power is given to question the man spiritually and temporally; but *on no account* to omit earnestly to move him to make a will, and be liberal to the poor; and then, after these matters are attended to, it is presumed a little comfort is needed by the sick man; and upon his asking for it, he has it granted to him in this form: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church, to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences; and by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins," &c. If any doubt remains upon your mind, of the affinity between the Church of England and the Church of Rome, I hope I shall now remove it. The form of absolution used by the Church of Rome runs thus: "Our Lord Jesus Christ absolve thee; and I, by his authority, absolve thee from thy sins," &c. Here, then, your Church "out-Herods Herod." You deny, as professed Protestants, the assumption of the Church of Rome, to forgive sins at all; but *your Church* claims the power to absolve from "*all*" sins!

But let us examine this "order" a little more closely; and perhaps it will aid our examination, if we inquire, 1st, What is meant by the term church here? and 2dly, Upon what authority this part of her "order" is founded?

If, by the term church, you mean what your 19th Article declares it to be, "a congregation of faithful men," then you overturn almost your entire order; for as that generally obtains, you admit not *the people*, be they ever so "faithful," even to the appointment or selection of a ministry among themselves, much less any interference in their "orders;" the people in the view of your church being made for the clergy, and not the clergy for the people; apostolic precedent having nothing to do with your hierarchy; (see 2 Cor. iv. 5;) but if by the term church, you mean that which claims, according to your 20th Article, "the power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith,"

then, of course, we must understand, "the king and the parliament of these realms;" for your articles and canons teach us, that *they* are here supreme; and according to the decree of the convocation of the first year of Elizabeth, "Nothing," it is said, "shall be henceforward accounted heresy, but what is so adjudged by the Holy Scriptures, or in any one of the first four general councils, determining according to the word of God; or, finally, *which shall be so adjudged in the time to come, by the court of Parliament.*" Most plainly, then, the authority of the Bible, *without your Parliament*, is nothing to your Church. She owes her existence, and her downfall, and her uprising, and continued standing, only to successive Acts of Parliament; and, of course, these being "authorized guides" in these matters, we must *submissively* conclude, that it is only by one of these "Acts" that this authority is deputed to the clergy of this Church:—was it, then, by mistake, an oversight in printing, that the name of "our Lord Jesus Christ" was introduced into this form, instead of "the king and Parliament?"

Oh! but, of course, as a professedly Protestant Church, you must be presumed to have some authority in Scripture for this: have you so?—then let us examine it. Yes! it is *precisely the same*, and no other, than that cited by the Church of Rome, for her power of absolution; and it is found in John xx. 22, 23, "And Jesus breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." But pray observe, this was connected with the commission given to the Apostles by our Lord himself, with the conveyance and miraculous powers of the Holy Spirit; and, consequently, the performance of miracles in attestation of their mission and authority; the remission or retention of the *cause* being put for the *effect*, according to the usual method of expression among the Hebrews: and unless you can prove the continuation of the same powers, for the same purposes, your quotation will not answer your purpose; and, consequently, the *authority* for the practice founded upon it completely fails you! If you say, that the "order" is limited to them that are penitent, even then the power of discerning spirits is claimed; and if you have not that power, the assumption of the authority connected with it, is altogether presumptuous; or if you say, that the whole form is to be taken only as a declaration, that sins are forgiven upon the evidence of repentance and faith, then it is saying no more than every Christian is at liberty to say to his fellow-christian; and then after all, the whole order, as it regards the "authority" assumed, amounts to—*nothing!* What Churches, then, must those of England and Rome be, to make so "much ado about nothing!" But is it nothing? On the contrary, is it not esteemed by their clergy, yea, even *by yourself*, as a proof of their "apostolic" character; and is it not on this very account, that such "breathless haste" is so frequently evinced, when a person is sick and like to die, to send for the clergyman, to receive his confession, to absolve him from his sins, and, in token of his absolution, to give him "the sacrament before he dies?" And that the Churches of England and Rome are united together in these acts, let an eloquent writer, to whom I have already referred (Dr. Fletcher) reply. Speaking of the claims of the priesthood of the latter Church, he says, "A mysterious efficacy attends his official discharge of sacramental rites. In baptism he regenerates, in confirmation he assures them of the grace of God, in the eucharist he works a miracle, in penance he remits and retains

their sins, and in extreme unction he gives them a passport for heaven!"

Yes, Sir! and in the place of "extreme unction," I maintain, the sacrament is introduced, by your Church, to the sick and dying. And here I am sorry to be called upon to complain of an act of inadvertence, I will not say, of designed misrepresentation, in your reference to my first Letter. I therein endeavoured to convince you, that praying for the dead was an unreasonable and unscriptural employment; and then, *in a separate paragraph*, as my Letter will show, I referred to what you consider an indispensable requisite to comfort and salvation, the administration of the Lord's-supper to the dying. But this was not assigned as a *reason*, or a "*principle*" against praying for the dead, as you speak of it on the twenty-fifth page of your Letter, but as a short comment upon another of what I believe to be your erroneous notions of the efficacy of what are called sacraments. For, in common with the Church of Rome, and the formularies of the Church of England, (though contrary to her 25th Article,) *you maintain the inherent efficacy of baptism and the Lord's-supper*; nor is this *peculiar*, but so common, that it may be called even a *vulgar* notion; and no wonder that it should be so, when the formularies and practices of the clergy of your Church teach the people that the notion is true. Most cordially do I approve of every sentiment you have expressed concerning the Lord's-supper, from the second sentence of the twenty-sixth page of your Letter, to the end of the paragraph: it is so scripturally and experimentally correct; the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel, with their sacred and satisfying influence, are so clearly set forth, that I can only hope to be excused if I say, that either you did not write what is there printed, or you did not believe what you wrote; or if you did both, somebody else must have written the thirty-second page of your Letter, for the sentiments expressed thereon are perfectly contradictory to the whole! But upon that fatal page, the thirty-second page of your Letter, I must enlarge by and by. We are now animadverting on the administration of the Lord's-supper; not, be it remembered, according to Christ's institution, and among his own humble and decided followers, but according to the order of the Church of England, *indiscriminately*, among the sick and dying; and we maintain, that on this account it frequently, and most undeniably, becomes a delusive ground of hope to the dying, and even to survivors. Let me not, however, be mistaken here. I refer not to those who by their previous habits may be *known* to be Christians indeed, and who may wish, as a closing proof of Christian love among Christian brethren, to partake with them the visible memorials of the purchase of their "common salvation;"—no! for *them* it may be "a time of refreshment," in the anticipation of death and eternity; and like their divine and beloved Master, who instituted the ordinance no long time before "the decease which he accomplished at Jerusalem," they may say, "we will not taste again with you, until we have it new in the kingdom of our Father!" But surely "it is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it unto dogs;" it is not "meet to cast pearls before swine;" it is not meet, as your clergy do, to yield to the requirement of administering the Lord's-supper to the dying, whether they are satisfied of their Christian character or not; or rather, as they most generally, if not uniformly do, *urge* its administration upon *all*, without any discrimination of character whatsoever. *This is the evil*, in connexion with the form of absolution, against which I contend; and that it is a

real, and not an *imaginary* evil, undeniable facts most fully testify. By the individuals themselves, and by survivors also, the administration, (or, I should say, the profanation or perversion, of the ordinance,) is viewed in the light of a saving ordinance, a viaticum, to help them on the way, a "sure and certain" pledge of their admission into heaven at last, whatever their previous life, or character, or conduct, may have been! And whether the individual may have been, until that hour, when "the order" was observed, an habitual Sabbath-breaker, profane swearer, and despiser of them that are, as well as that which is, good; or were the most notorious prostitutes, debauchees, and drunkards, dying under the influence of the diseases their previous habits had brought upon them; or whether they were brought out of the condemned cell to the chapel of the prison, in which they were confined; or remained in their cell previous to their execution, according to the laws they may have violated; still the "sacrament" is either called for, or *urged upon them*, that they may have *something* of a religious character wherewith to rest their hopes for eternity! Nor can it be a matter of doubt, from the representations that are continually made of this affair, that this very "order" operates as a "strong delusion," on the one hand, to the dying, and an encouragement to sin, on the other, to the living. The dying man thinks his salvation sure, because (to use his own words perhaps) "the parson has been with him, and given him the sacrament;" and survivors encourage themselves in an utter disregard to personal religion, while they are in health, and have no thought of dying, because they persuade themselves, they shall have time enough to attend to religion,—their soul's salvation, then; and that what they may not be able to do, "the parson" will help them to do *then*! Infatuated mortals! they think not that their "day of grace" may be sinned away; that by their cherished insensibility of mind, to the immediately offered benefits and blessings of that grace, and their continued habits of sinful indulgence, long before their mortal eyes may be closed in death, their character may become so fixed, and their doom so certain, as if they were already "lifting up their eyes in hell being in torments:" and what renders their state as deplorable as it is infatuated, is, that your Church, by her perversion of sacred institutions, is ready to cherish the delusions under which they labour, even to their last gasp, on this side eternity! Need you farther proofs of the evil influence resulting from the indiscriminate administration of the Lord's-supper in your Church? Formerly, you know, it was deemed a *test* of qualification for every office under government; but, alas! *much to your regret*, the Act which required the exhibition of that *test*, was deemed a disgrace to the statute-book, and to the hierarchy which supported it; and, therefore, *at last* it was repealed. But what then? were all the abuses of the ordinance done away with by the repeal of that Act within the pale of your Church? Far from it! Time after time, and especially before your "great festivals," *all classes*, believing and unbelieving, pious and profane, intemperate and sober, chaste and debauched, sensible and foolish,* all, without exception, are exhorted, entreated, almost commanded, to come, to take the "sacrament" according to "order;" and having done that, even the very worst of this *fellowship* will think themselves, and be reputed by others, good Church-of-Eng-

* I have recently heard, that a noted idiot in this parish has been urged to take the sacrament! The other classes I have referred to, are not less notorious, perhaps, in every parish. *Ab uno, disce omnes!*

land Christians; and, like the deluded of old, will say to themselves, "We shall have peace, (for we have taken the sacrament,) though we walk in the imagination of our hearts!" The Lord's-supper, however, was never so abused by the Apostles, nor by the Christian church, in the purest periods of her history; nor by that portion of it which still continues to exist, however despised by the world; though in this country, till within a few years, she could only be said to exist by sufferance!

The same system of delusion, as to what is essential to Christian character, and the support of "a good hope through grace," is kept up in entire harmony with its other "orders," in the

"Order for the burial of the dead." To this I ventured to refer in my former Letter; and if I had not had some acquaintance with its parts, and with the sophistry that has been employed to vindicate it from the objections so continuously and so justly urged against it, I should not have used the language I did in reference to it. Nor, perhaps, would any fresh animadversions upon it be now necessary, were it not that you have charged me with positive ignorance of the "order." After quoting *nearly* my own words, you add, "I am at a loss to conceive where you have met with such an expression, *so contrary to what appears in our Prayer Book!*" Were the expression of hope, which you condemn, much more immediately connected with the individual buried *than, if you will again read over the service in our Prayer Book, you will see that it is*, it still would only imply a charitable wish that it might be as we speak." Admitting, with much deference, that my memory might not serve me correctly, on the occasion referred to, I will now follow your suggestion, and renew, at once, my investigation and exposure of the whole "order." Thus it begins: "Here is to be noted, that the office ensuing is not to be used for any that die unbaptized, or excommunicate, or have laid violent hands upon themselves;" and hence I infer, that over *all others*, with all their "multi-form and mixed" varieties of state and character, this office *is to be* used. "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his great mercy, to take unto himself the soul of our dear brother here departed, we therefore commit his body to the ground, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life," &c. Again: "We give thee hearty thanks, for that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our brother out of the miseries of this sinful world," &c. And again: "We meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin, unto the life of righteousness; that when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him, as our hope is this our brother doth," &c. Now, Sir, these quotations, I must maintain, fully justify my objections to its indiscriminate application to all who are buried within the walls of your so-called "consecrated ground." The officiating clergyman is, of course, presumed to be a Christian; and not only to know the truth, but on such an occasion to speak it. His words, therefore, must be the exact expression of his thoughts, and not the smallest mental reservation, equivocation, or deception be intended in their use; then how does the matter stand? The very men whom only a few days before, perhaps, he "cursed" for being "unmerciful, fornicators, and adulterers, covetous persons, idolaters, slanderers, drunkards, and extortioners;"† or

* See the exact expressions which I used in the Letter alluded to, now published with this in the Appendix.

† See the Commination Service.

declared, except they kept the catholic faith, as expressed in the Athanasian creed, "without doubt shall perish everlastingly;" yea, the very men, to adopt the language you so erroneously used in reference to John Calvin, who have "died in despair, blaspheming God, and invoking devils;" or who may, by their crimes, have reached the lowest state of human guilt, and even forfeited their lives to the laws of their country, —*all these alike*, may have the same office read over them, the same description, thanksgiving, and prayer, used; and if the officiating clergyman were to deny them burial, they not coming within the prescribed exceptions, or to *vary the service on the occasion*, according to the 68th canon of your Church, he would be liable to suspension for so doing! Slaves of the system! from my heart I pity them! We talk of slavery; we plead against the accursed system of West Indian slavery; but what is even that, compared with the slavery of the clergy of the Church of England? The one is the slavery of the body —the other of the mind; the one tortures the material frame—the other distorts the moral powers of the soul; the one may be *innocently* endured—the other cannot be sustained without the most awful *criminality*! In vain is excuse urged for the *indiscriminate use* of this service. If language be the expression of thought; if thought, in the ordinary intercourse of life, and especially religious services, is required to be correct; then the language used on this occasion must mean what it says, or nothing. The belief, and thanksgiving, and prayer of the minister, cannot be transferred from the individual to be buried to himself: they must refer to the body committed to the dust, or to nobody. "The words cannot logically mean the very reverse of what they say, and they cannot grammatically mean less—they either mean all, or nothing. If they mean nothing, they are known to do so, either by both parties—those who pronounce, and those who hear them—or only by one, namely, those by whom they are employed. Take any of these suppositions you please, and you will find yourselves in the horns of a double dilemma. If they mean what they say, they express what is unscriptural and false; and they perpetually repeat it; they meet us in every important crisis, from the cradle to the grave, and always in the form of a *dangerous delusion*. If they mean *nothing*, and are thus universally understood by *both* parties, then they are a solemn farce, performed under the mask of religion, and in the name of God! It is difficult to conceive of any thing more dreadful than such an awful mockery. But, if they mean nothing, and are known to do so, only by one party, then in addition to this attribute of awfulness, they are the means of conveying to the minds of numbers, ideas which must be injurious, and may be fatal!"*

It was far from my wish to enter into a discussion of the topic of consecration, but you have compelled me. I only used the words "consecrated ground," and you have favoured me with a page and a half of pleadings in its favour! and these are commenced with what, perhaps, you may consider, is a kind of incontrovertible axiom in its favour: "*All nations*," say you, "*have ever had* places set apart for the

* The above remarks were applied to the Baptismal, Confirmation, Absolution, and Burial Services, by the author, from whose "Hints illustrative of the Duty of Dissent," they were extracted; a little book, whose intrinsic excellencies—argumentative and scriptural—entitle it to the best consideration, of all who may be so happy as to procure a copy of it.

interment of the dead." Now, had you said this merely in reference to the erection of memorials for the dead, you would have been a little nearer the truth ; but, even that practice has been far from universal among "all nations," or continuous, "ever" from the beginning of the ages to the present hour. The Egyptians embalmed the bodies of their dead, and put them in a kind of open chest, about the size of the body, and then placed them either in sepulchres, or *in their houses* ; neither of which places received any other kind of consecration, than the recollection which these bodies would help them to cherish of the virtues of their deceased ancestors. Some nations have exposed their dead to the vultures, or birds of prey ; others, from the proximity of their situation, cast them into the seas ;* and the ancient Greeks and Romans, like the modern Hindoos, consumed the bodies of their dead upon the funeral pile ! Perhaps, the consumption of Pompey's remains by his freed-man, the ashes of which were afterwards collected and sent to Cornelia, may now occur to your recollection ; while the name of the *Hindoos* may associate in your mind the heart-appalling spectacle of the living widow immolating herself upon the funeral pile, by the side of her deceased husband, that their *bodies* may unitedly share in one common destiny ! Among the Jews the practice prevailed, as among us in the present day, of entombing their dead, either *upon* or *under* the earth ; but these were in places remote from "the far-famed temple at Jerusalem ;" and by their being chiefly, if not exclusively, family property, such as the cave of Machpelah, the sepulchres of the kings, and the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, we are at a loss to assign them any other kind of "consecration," than the recollection of departed worth would give them. And though it may be expedient to have burying places for the dead, near to our villages, towns, or cities, yet I am utterly unable to ascertain, of what utility, or upon what authority, their consecration can be placed. But, of course, you cannot dissociate in your mind, consecrated "temples and altars" with burying places ; and you seem quite confident, that Scripture will bear you out in their association ; hence you refer to the appearance of God to Moses in the bush, that was apparently burned, but not consumed : but, unless you can prove the continuance of such a manifestation of present Deity, your plea from that event must fail you. You refer also to the dedication of Solomon's temple ; but, though there were deposited the visible memorials of the Divine presence, Solomon himself declared, that the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands ; and the only reason why the Jews, when they prayed, turned their faces towards the temple was, because of the sacrifices *there* appointed to be offered up, typical of the great propitiatory Sacrifice for sin ; "which things are done away in Christ : " and, lest these references should fail you, you declare farther, that there was a *prohibition* given to the Jews to worship in the *open air*, after the temple was built ; and that "all the offices" of the ancient church, being ordered by the Son of God himself, we are at liberty to seek salvation only in *such places* ; by which you tell us, in a subsequent sentence, you mean a "consecrated building, which, with a congregation, must be called a church !" Indeed, Sir, I am very sorry, that no more enlightened appeals in favour of consecration

* What a pitiable state must the poor sailors be in of "all nations," who may die on the mighty deep, and find a burying place there ; no "consecrated ground" being near at hand to receive them ! Would a little *holy water*, carried out by a ship's company, answer the purpose of consecrating "a watery grave ?"

can be offered in the nineteenth century ; but, most gravely do I assure you, that all my Bibles, ancient and modern, fail of giving me the least information upon such points. Permit me, however, in vindication of "*open air*" preaching, when opportunity presents or requires, to offer a few remarks, more especially as I know your enlightened Church is much of the same way of thinking as yourself ; and has recently turned out one of her most faithful sons from her protection, for daring to preach in the "*open air*," contrary to her canons !* After Solomon's temple had been reduced to ruin, and the Jews returned from their captivity in Babylon, we are told, (in the Bible, at least,) that Nehemiah stood upon a pulpit of wood, above all the people, that were gathered together into the street, that was before the water gate ! Good man ! little did he think, that about 2300 years after he had thus dared, in the *open air*, to expound the Scriptures unto the people, he would have been found disobedient to a prohibition ! Surely my Bible must be heretical—it has not got the *canons* of your Church in it ; and it belongs to a "small and despised" Dissenter ; but, indeed, this Bible tells me—(perhaps you, or your curate, who so much admires the Bishop of Oxford's above-recited deed, will do me the favour to tell his Lordship of the discovery)—that my Bible tells me,† that our Lord Jesus Christ himself—the light of the world, and the glory of his people Israel, actually went up to the side of a mountain, and from thence taught his disciples and the people that came unto him ; that once, wearied "going about doing good," he actually sat on the side of "a well," and effectually preached the gospel to a woman of Samaria, and taught her, at once, the spirituality of the nature of God, and of the worship he required, without any regard to situation, building, or ground, from whence it was offered, as requiring consecration, or being consecrated ; and farther, that so far from "sanctioning all the offices of the ancient church," by which, of course, you intend the so-called "*apostolic*," in their consecration of water, earth, wood, bricks, stone, or mortar, he actually denounced the scribes and pharisees---hypocrites, who made such distinctions of things, in reference to the professed worship of God ; and even reasoned and remonstrated with them, upon *their own principles*, to show how unreasonable and impious such practices were. Nor were the inspired Apostles themselves less guilty than their Divine Master, of the non-observance of this lately discovered prohibition ; for though, when they conveniently could, they met the people, and "preached Jesus and the resurrection" to them in the temple, the synagogues, and praying places of the land of Judea, and the regions round about ; yet, when they extended their labours "every where," they could not frequent such places ; and therefore, in places of public concourse, on the seashore, on Mars' hill, the court of the Areopagites, and in hired houses, they prayed and they preached, and as the result, "many believed and turned unto the Lord." And so utterly disregarding were they of what is now called "*ancient offices*," that they even denounced such as should retain things "after the commandments and doctrines of men."

Probably I need not dwell longer upon the subject of *consecrated churches*, though you very strongly intimate that we are at liberty to

* There is a remarkable canon (the 74) concerning the dress of the clergy—enjoining, that none shall wear any other *night caps* than "black silk, satin, or velvet ;" nor "any light-coloured stockings." How would the sticklers for the authority of the canon law stand the test of inquiry upon these important matters ?

† See Matt. v. 1 ; John iv ; Matt. 32 ; Acts v. 42 ; Acts xiv. 8—18 ; Acts xvii. 22 ; Acts xx. from the 16th ver. ; Acts xxviii. 30, 31 ; Coloss. ii. 18—23.

seek salvation only through them ! I have been unable to ascertain whether a single Act of Parliament ever passed upon the subject, and of how much more authority Acts of Parliament are than the Bible *in your Church*, I have already been obliged to remind you ; nor is there any “ order ” prescribed for such “ offices ” in the Book of Common Prayer ! Perhaps the Reformers deemed it sufficient for their purpose, that in every important place throughout the kingdom, certain buildings had been erected, and dedicated, after the fashion of the heathen, “ the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ,” to certain “ tutelar deities,” or so-called saints, which would still serve as places of worship, and therefore were appropriated accordingly. Be it so : it was then convenient to devote these “ consecrated ” buildings to such a purpose ; but it is far from being convenient—consistent with the dictates of righteousness or utility, in the present day—with burdens of taxes and tithes, under which the nation groans from one end to the other, that so many hundreds of thousands of pounds should be expended in the erection of buildings, placed due-east and west,* (as if an omnipresent God were to be found more in one direction than another,) after the choicest models of heathen antiquity, dedicated precisely as the heathen temples and Roman Catholic churches were ; and “ consecrated,” too, as it is called, at the expense of thousands more ; to be extorted from the pockets of the *parishioners*, (*Dissenters* as well as conformists,) for the support of their “ Graces and their Lordships,” their rectors or their vicars ; when, for one half the amount, buildings might be erected that would accommodate *five times* the number of people, who would all have greater facilities for conveniently meeting together for public worship, in plain, unadorned structures, than they can possibly have either in the modern or ancient style of Grecian, Roman, Gothic, or Norman “ consecrated churches.” By what mummary of will-worship the ceremony of consecration may be performed, by “ their Graces or their Lordships,” in the present day, I know not ; but if it be after the form used by that intolerant and persecuting bigot, “ his Grace,” Archbishop Laud,—and I cannot ascertain any “ authority ” for that,—we should unhesitatingly pronounce it now, as it was then, “ an intolerable piece of ecclesiastical foppery, which no sound Protestant can read without indignation.” The assumption of the thing itself is only one among a thousand other means, kept up by schismatical churches, to insult the rational nature of man ; to deny the spirituality of religion ; to invade the rights of conscience ; and to extort money from the pockets of the people.

There is, however, another kind of consecration which still deserves our notice ; namely, “ the form and manner of *making*, ordaining, and consecrating of bishops, priests, and deacons.” This, indeed, may seem a very formidable part of your “ order ” to attack, and one which a mere “ stripling ” might almost tremble to advance to, if the word of God did not so amply expose the presumptuous wickedness of the whole, and thousands of instances did not every where testify, that men may be “ made ” into these orders of your hierarchy, who, like Simon Magus of old, supposing that the gift of God may be purchased with money, do yet prove themselves to be in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity.

* How impressively was the custom denounced by the prophet Ezekiel, (ch. viii. from ver. 15,) as one of the abominations of the heathen ; for the imitation of which, the Israelites were to be visited by the heaviest judgments ! And shall any, claiming the character of Christians, expect to do the *same things* with impunity ?

In my former letter, I said much to show you who may scripturally be considered ministers of Christ; and how opposite the ministry of your Church is to them needs no lengthened induction of particulars to testify. The evidence of men that have been trained up in the Universities, according to the "due order of this realm" is sufficiently plain and undeniable upon this matter. To say nothing of the origin of these men—generally "sprigs of nobility," or the youngest sons of men of rank and wealth, and not unfrequently, "the fools of the family," nor of their early education at our "public schools," where (to use the language of the author of "Social Duties," well known in this county, and at the anti-union Bible Society) "there is not one single form of vice in the world which is not practised;" nor of the purchase of next presentations, &c., to facilitate which, public offices are now opened, and graduated scales of charges announced, (as if the "cure of souls" were a mere matter of bargain and sale,) it may suffice to advert to what takes place about the time these men are "made," &c. It is said that College testimonials are generally required of them; these affirm that during the time the candidate for this office has been at College, he has behaved himself "honestly, piously, and soberly." "And now," says the Rev. H. B. Bulteel, "I speak from my own certain knowledge, and affirm, that these testimonials have been given to men notorious for nothing so much in their day, as profaneness, debauchery, and all kind of riotous living; and, on the other hand, I also know for a certainty, that these testimonials have been withheld from piety, honesty, and sobriety, for no other reason than they happened to be accompanied with a profession of the grace articles of the Church of England."* But what do these men that are thus generally preferred,—and it is but too notorious that the majority of these made bishops, priests, and deacons, are of this character,—what do they profess, when they apply to be "made, ordained, and consecrated?" Verily, that *they trust they are inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost*, to take upon them this office and ministration! Possibly they may regard this form, as they do their subscription to the Articles, a mere matter of course; a something with which their *consciences* have nothing at all to do; and only a passport to the honours and emoluments of the Church! However this may be, the facts are too notorious to be denied, that numbers make this profession who do not believe that there is such a Being as the Holy Ghost, or who, in what they do believe, belie the whole testimony which holy men of God spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; or in what they practice, as it regards this testimony, prove

* Admiral Stirling may remember, that when I read my "Reply to his Letter" to him, he cried out, on hearing this sentence, as he did on hearing some others, "That's the testimony of an enemy." But is it not assuming too much that even an enemy to the *iniquities* of the Church, cannot speak truth? If the University, before whom Mr. Bulteel made those declarations, *could* have disproved them, does he think they would not have done so before this? It was a *contemptible* revenge that was taken upon this faithful man afterwards, (though in keeping with all that has been done to support the Establishment,) by the Bishop of Oxford to suspend him for field preaching. The best cure which one of the "Heads of the Church" could invent for that, was suggested to one of the Bishops who was complaining of Whittield's preaching, and asking what should be done with him to silence him. "I don't know," said the king, "unless you make him a Bishop!" A powerful but just rebuke! The country, as well as the late King George, and perhaps the present king too, is very generally convinced of the utter inutility of such appendages even to a "State Religion," and therefore, it may be hoped that ere long "the reward of their hands shall be given them."

that, as did their fathers, so do they always resist the truth ; and come not near to it in the way of personal investigation or application, lest their deeds should be made manifest, not to others only, but *to themselves also* ! Can any infidelity be more inexcusable ; any hypocrisy more profound ; any wickedness more aggravated by the circumstances under which it is committed, than this ? You and others may talk about the learning, the respectability, and the piety of the clergy ; but the eyes of the people are too extensively opened to a discernment of their true character, to be imposed upon by such representations ; and though you say Bishop Burnet does not give any more information, respecting the duties of candidates, than the ordination service itself, you shall now have the opportunity of hearing what he does say, and comparing it with the service, that you may fairly determine where the deficiency lies. In my edition of his “ Pastoral Care,” dated 1713, and p. 96, he says, “ Certainly the answer that is made to this (question put to deacons before ordination) ought to be well considered ; for if any says, *I trust so*, that yet knows nothing of any such motion, and can give no account of it, he lies to the Holy Ghost ; and makes his first approach to the altar with a *lie* in his mouth, and that not to *men* but to *God* : and how can one expect to be received by *God*, or be *sent* and *sealed* by him, that dares do a thing of so crying a nature, as to pretend that he trusts he has this motion, who knows that he has it not, who has made no reflections on it, and when asked what he means by it, can say nothing concerning it ; and yet he *dares venture* to come and say it before God and his Church ? ” This question, however, being answered according to the form prescribed, and each of the others as they are proposed in succession, the lord bishop lays his hand upon the head of him about to be “ made, ordained, and consecrated,” and utters these awful words :—“ Receive the Holy Ghost, for the office and work now committed unto thee, *by the imposition of our hands*. Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven ; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained,” &c. What arrogance ! what presumption ! what finished anti-christianity is this ! Can we wonder, that Christianity is so much ridiculed and despised in our country ;—that there is so little of its influence to be found, either in the Church of Rome or England, when such language is used by weak and erring mortals like ourselves ; when such fundamental errors take place in the *making*, &c., of their ministry ? No wonder, that candidates for orders should make so light of them ; that false testimonials should be so easily procured ; and that the whole form should be so easily got over by the ordainers and the ordained ; when they must both know, if they know any thing at all about Christianity, that the whole is a farce ;—a solemn mockery ;—a profane imposition, that deserves as much to be discountenanced, and reprobated, and universally dissented from, as the arrogant assumptions of the Pope of Rome ; one of whose titles is, the Lord God the Pope : as the miracles of the dark and wonder-working ages, which permitted such assumptions ; or as the enthusiasts of our own day, who claim the power of “ tongues ” as well as miracles ! In adverting to the order of Absolution, I took occasion to advert to the only passage from which this form of words is taken ; and to state, that it was confined to the Apostles, *and the performance of miracles in attestation of their mission and authority* ; I need not multiply proofs of the correctness of these statements ; you and others may “ search and see ” for yourselves ; and truly, I think,

if either your bishops possess the miraculous endowments of the Holy Ghost themselves; or any to whom they assume the power, by the imposition of their hands, of imparting them; they should at once prove their possession of them, as did the Apostles, and demand universal submission to their instructions, if they have any new or old to communicate: more than this, the people ought every where, whenever they see a bishop or a "duly authorized" priest or deacon moving about, to bring out their sick, their dying, or their dead, that they may heal, or revive them, or give them life; nay more, "this doctrine, if believed by the people, ought to bring them at the priests' feet, as the ambassadors of Palermo, at the feet of Pope Martin the Fourth, repeating these words thrice, "Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us;" or, Ye that have power to forgive, or retain, or absolve from all sins, forgive and absolve us,—deliver us from hell, and take us to heaven at once! I know, that if your mind is capable of being moved, as it ought to be, it must be shocked at the plain and unequivocal import and tendency of the language used on this occasion; and if you are not shocked, I confess that I am;—and even more than shocked, at this profanity beyond all profaneness! I use the words of Dr. Samuel Clarke,—“Profane,” he says, “beyond all profaneness, is the doctrine of those who contend, that the *Apostles themselves*, much less that any of their fallible successors, had a discretionary power of forgiving or retaining whose sins they pleased.” “And what adds (says Towgood in his ‘Dissent fully Justified,’) to the absurdity of this claim is, that this form of words was never used, never known in the Christian church, for the first thousand years; was never attempted to be introduced till the eleventh or twelfth century, which, every one knows, was a period of the deepest ecclesiastical darkness, stupidity, and oppression. Morinus, a learned priest, has published sixteen of the most ancient rituals, or forms of ordination, used in the church, from the earliest ages of Christianity in which any such are found. But it is peculiarly worthy of attention, that in not one of the first fifteen rituals does the form now used appear! It is the last only, *the sixteenth*, which Morinus takes to be about three hundred years old, which assumes to itself this power. Yea, amidst the pride and intoxication of this corruptest state of the church, so much sense and modesty seem still to have remained, that this extravagant claim was not universally admitted; for the learned priest observes, that in two other pontificals of the same age, this form was not found! And is this extravagant pretension, which the Church of Rome, amidst all its pride and wantonness of superstition, from the fifth to the twelfth century, never presumed to make, now openly avowed and adopted by the Church of England!” Another writer, in an “Appeal to the Clergy,” &c., lately published, says, “The ordination service, in this respect, teaches the people to believe a lie; and authorizes the priesthood to practise an imposture;—an imposture too, of a most awful nature, since it represents the Holy Ghost as calling and qualifying men to offices in the Church, which they never fulfil; and giving them power to fleece the people, that they may gratify the vain desires of an earthly mind. To affirm that such men have received the Holy Ghost, and are officiating in the Church under his direction, is to father upon *Him* the sins of the clergy, and to make *Him* a party concerned in all the sinecures, pluralities, non-residences, and other scandalous proceedings, which stain with so deep

a guilt the character of the Church of England." "Is there no room," says Towgood, almost prophetically, "to apprehend the displeasure of Almighty God, at the representation of Christianity in so injurious a light? Were the men of Bethshemesh smitten with death, for looking presumptuously into the ark, and Uzzah for stretching out his hand to support it, and Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Ghost, and can the sacred name of God, and the 'doctrines which are according to godliness,' be trifled with, profaned, and prostituted to purposes of worldly interest and ambition, without danger of divine resentment? Is there not a time coming, when God will visit for these things, and be 'avenged on such a nation as this?'"

But there is yet another portion of your Book of Common Prayer, which must not be passed over in silence; and it is that which comprehends your Articles of Religion.' These, you tell us, on the 27th page of your Letter, are taken from Scripture; and though above your comprehension, are not contrary to your belief! To what are termed the "doctrinal articles," I believe few exceptions are taken by Protestant Dissenters; but I confess, if I were *required* to subscribe to them, I should demur to the requirement, as an imposition at once upon my understanding and conscience. Taking the Scriptures alone as the standard of my faith and practice, I feel myself at full liberty, yea, bound by the consciousness of obligation and responsibility to God, to form my own views of religious truth and duty, and to express them in my own form of words, without either wishing to impose that form upon another for his belief, or admitting a similar imposition upon myself. The very method which the Divine Author of these Scriptures has pursued, in what he therein inculcates upon our minds, forms the best authority for such a course as this; for no system in a continuous form of words is therein to be found; and, therefore, not only are "many of its parts above our comprehension," as might be expected from the incomprehensible nature of their Author; but they require to be seriously considered, "pondered in the heart," cast up one against another, "spiritual things being compared with spiritual," before any safe or satisfactory conclusions can be formed respecting them. And were I required to vindicate this part of the ways of God to man, I should do so, on the grounds of the peculiar constitution of our nature, and the supreme responsibility of our condition. Hence, then, upon these matters I maintain, that God alone has a right to direct us; that this right he has not delegated to any man, nor any collective assemblies of men; and that, therefore, none can have the shadow of a right to *impose* "Articles of Religion," upon their fellow-men; and that if they assume that right, they violate the rights of conscience, and arrogate to themselves the prerogative of God. Religious submission is what every man owes to God alone; whoever, therefore, usurps authority in this matter over others, usurps the authority of God, and claims that as due to a mortal, which is due to "Him who only hath immortality." The source whence Articles of Religion proceed is of little consequence, whether from Augsburg, Lambeth, Westminster, or the Savoy; still, however excellent, and even correct, they may be, the same objections lie against them, as *impositions* which ought not either to be attempted or submitted to. Besides, the imposition of Articles of Religion appears to me most plainly a violation of the apostolic precept: "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Now, in most Articles of Religion, put forth

by authority or otherwise, there is a maturity of knowledge and reflection, and either an avowed renunciation of errors, or an implied opposition to them observable, which make not the smallest allowance, either for immaturity of knowledge, or weakness of faith, or any unfitness to enter into "doubtful disputations." Even if no other objections lay against subscription to these Articles, to require it in such cases, is to assume the existence of what in a thousand instances does not, and, from the nature of things, cannot be expected to exist; and, therefore, to injure, instead of advancing, the cause it is intended to serve. Of this I am well assured, from cases that have come within my own cognisance, in which individuals of the character now contemplated have, after their subscription, either continued as weak in the faith as they were before, or else have most deplorably deviated from their assumed faith; or, what is inconceivably worse, have entirely relinquished every kind and measure of faith together! Wisdom, then, even in this view, lies on the side of the dictates of truth, and not of either expediency or assumed necessity. But who knows not that an entire uniformity of faith has never yet been, and, therefore, it may be presumed, never will be, acquired by the imposition of Articles, proceeding either from ecclesiastical authorities only, or when united with the authority of the State. "It is difficult," says Paley, "to conceive how this could be expected by any who observed the incurable diversity of human opinion, upon all subjects short of demonstration." Of the truth of this remark the subscribers to your own Articles form an incontrovertible evidence. Even if all your clergy were capable of being divided into two classes, Calvinistic and Arminian, it is obvious that the *former only* could exhibit a conformity to the faith they had sworn to, the doctrinal articles being strictly Calvinistic; while the latter, who are equally sworn conformists, must be in reality nonconformists! But who, that knows any thing at all of these men, does not know, that even if they were capable of being divided into these two classes, even those classes would be found divisible into subdivisions almost innumerable; but as it is utterly impossible to divide, or classify them all, in such a way, all kinds of faith, and even (I blush for human nature, as well as a religious profession, to declare it) *no faith at all prevails among them!* What absurdity and impiety, then, most plainly characterises an *imposition* of Articles of Religion on the one hand, and *subscription* to those Articles on the other. Now, no such absurdities or impieties prevail among Congregational Dissenters, and yet upon investigation an uniformity of faith and practice will be found to characterize them in every place! The reason for this distinction, yea, without arrogance we may call it *superiority*, may be easily traced. In the Church of England terms of communion are an expression of political obedience; among us they relate solely to religious character. In the one articles of faith are subscribed to, because they are imposed; among the other they are received *without subscription*, because they are believed. In the one it is the authority of man which is recognised; among the other it is the authority of God!*

* It may not be out of place to notice here a remark of the Admiral's, which had, before I read my reply to him, entirely escaped me. He says, in his Letter, "You must yourself have observed the lamentable declension of an orthodox creed, amongst some dissenting communions, who have deviated into Deism; and the unfortunate increase of unbelief in the United States of America, where there is no established church." The last part of this sentence, I shall be found, I trust, most fully to answer towards the

But when we speak favourably of the "doctrinal articles," of course we must be understood to speak of those only which we believe to accord with scriptural truth; because there are others which may be so designated, that have no warrant in Scripture; such as relate to the descent of Christ into hell, the Apocrypha and the creeds; but as to others, some of them are obviously unnecessary, as implied in the very existence of a professedly Christian church; and the remainder are either of so equivocal a character, as not to be received without the greatest caution, or so perfectly erroneous and anti-scriptural, either in what they assert or imply, as to demand an instant and decided rejection. Such are the twentieth, which declares the Church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, &c.; the twenty-first, which gives a power to princes to call an ecclesiastical assembly; the twenty-third, which gives to public authority, by which we are to understand the State, the power to call and designate to the work of the ministry; the twenty-sixth, which speaks of the mere ministers of a State religion being *Christ's ministers*, and yet *wicked men*; and at the same time, by the whole tenor of the article, represses every complaint against them, let them be ever so wicked; the twenty-ninth is a standing reproach to the Church for allowing what she reprobates, and encouraging so many wicked ministers, as well as members, to share in the memorials of the Saviour's death; the thirty-fifth evidently implies that the Homilies should be read and approved by the word of God, before they are sworn to be "godly and wholesome;" and "the question is," says Riland, "do the clergy give their full assent and consent to the Homilies? and if not, *what* do they give? It is too serious an inquiry to be resolved by a loose and equivocal reply;" the thirty-sixth declares that there is nothing in the consecration service, "either superstitious or ungodly," yet both reason and Scripture prove the reverse; and furthermore, that *the State*, and *not* the Church, "the congregation of faithful men,"

conclusion of my reply; but the first, I believe, to be an exaggerated representation of what, in some few cases, may have taken place; for indeed, *I have heard* of some ministers, with some few of their people, degenerating from what is termed the orthodox faith, to Socinianism or Free-thinkingism,—both of which are only modifications of Deism: but the great body of ministers and people fall not so from the faith once delivered to the saints. When individuals or communities so fall, they immediately become objects of avoidance to the other parts of our body; and we have no communion with them, in order to show the broad and marked distinction that subsists between them and us. Whatever deviations may arise among us, our avowed principles and practices enable us most easily and immediately to remedy; but is it so with the Church of England? On the contrary, are not deviations, abuses, profanities, and "Romish abominations" cherished and supported, and even pleaded for, age after age, without the least effort to remedy or remove them? There are deviations among some "dissenting communions," but these arise from the *abuse* of liberty, not its scriptural *use* and application. But what a motley group of subscribers to the same *Articles of Religion* would the Church of England exhibit, if fairly drawn out? "There would be Calvinists of all grades, from the supra-lapsarianism of Dr. Hawker, to the more moderate views of Davenant and South; Arminians, from Pelagianism to the modified Arminianism of Tillotson; Hutchinsonians; Baptistal Regenerationists and their opposites; Swedenborgians; Arians; Socinians; Southcotians; Modern Millenarians; Irvingites; Drummondites; and other isms and ites, almost innumerable; down to those who, in what they know naturally, as brute beasts, do corrupt themselves; feeding themselves without fear; clouds without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever! So much for the boasted uniformity and utility of "an established church!"

determines the validity of ordination ; and the thirty-seventh gives to kings and *queens* a right which, as mere magistrates, they ought not to possess, and at the same time *most falsely* declares, that God has given them this right ;* while the twentieth is contradicted by the thirty-fourth, in the admission of traditions and ceremonies, which, if not contrary to, may yet be proved inconsistent with, the dictates of the word of God ; and so also is the thirty-third contrary to the twenty-fifth ; the latter disavowing five out of the seven sacraments of the Church of Rome, at the same time retaining the whole in modified forms, as “orders,” and the former actually demanding penance, if not as a sacrament, as an order, which every one acquainted with the foolish white sheet business of the Church must very well know ; and how utterly inconsistent with the simple form of Christian church discipline that is, every one turning to the following passages in the New Testament may determine for themselves : Matt. xviii. 15—17 ; 1 Cor. v. ; 2 Cor. ii. 1—11 ; Tit. iii. 10, 11 ; and Gal. vi. 1, 2.

Such then, in few words, are the general objections to subscription to Articles of Religion, and to fourteen out of your Thirty-nine Articles, which have a regard to the most important practices of the Christian life. To each and to all of these, however, and to all and every thing else contained in, and prescribed by, the Book of Common Prayer, the members of the two Universities, and all the clergy of your Church, are compelled, and the obligation assumes even more than the solemnity of an oath, to give “their unfeigned assent and consent.” We need not retrace the history of these Articles ; it must suffice that we simply remind you, that the laws of England alone made them what they profess to be ; set them forth as the basis of *uniformity* in the Church, AND SEALED THEM WITH THE SACRIFICE OF THE LIVES, AS WELL AS THE LIBERTY AND PROPERTY, OF THE PURITANS ! The evils of the imposition, though not *felt* so fully now by us as they formerly were, are still *seen* in the total absence of all unity, even in the midst of an external and sworn conformity ; in the cherished indifference and insensibility of, it is to be feared, the majority of your clergy, to vital and practical godliness, as well as the people surrendering themselves to their charge ; and in the entire exclusion of all other churches, how scriptural and useful soever their character may be, from an assimilation with them in the way of official ministration, and Christian co-operation and exertion. The Church of England then, I repeat, not only from her own designation, but her peculiar nature and constitution, is PERFECTLY SCHISMATICAL, a dislocated part, if indeed it can be called a part at all, of the Christian church ; having nothing in common with that church but the Scriptures, (and rejecting a portion even of them, while at the same time she receives what is not a part of them, being purely Apocryphal,) and a small number only of her ministry, who, notwithstanding all the fetters of corruption with which they are chained and bound, do faithfully proclaim and inculcate their prominent truths and obligations. “It holds communion with no dissenting church ; it holds communion with no established church ; nay, it does not even hold communion with the Episcopal Church of Scotland ! it cuts itself

* The well-known author of “Social Duties” seems so much enraged with Paley, for comparing the “divine right of kings” to the “divine right of constables,” that one might infer almost that, after the most illustrious examples of passive obedience and non-resistance men, he would have no objection to take up Paley’s bones, and have them hung up at Tyburn or somewhere else, and buried under the gallows !

off from the whole Christian body, separates itself from all who will not acknowledge in it a power, the exercise of which, Christ has forbidden ; in no scriptural sense, can it be called a church : it is a union of sectaries, a combination of separatists, a crusade of schismatics against the spiritual union and liberties of the church, and it is nothing else. Individuals in it are holy and excellent ; but the *principle* of the confederacy of which they are a part is *schism*, and the confederacy itself is schismatic." In these respects, then, it forms a perfect contrast to the Christian church, in the best periods of her history ; and what alone can deserve that designation in the days in which we live : her unity then, as it is now, was preserved by her experimental acquaintance with, and inflexible adherence to, the distinguishing truths of the gospel ; by her respecting and supporting church discipline, according to the dictates of the gospel ; and by holding ministerial and Christian communion together, and, " with one heart and one soul," uniting in all their energies, influence, and exertions, for the advancement of the individual welfare, and the common prosperity. This is the kind of unity, which the best of men have ever laboured to preserve and promote ; and the violation of which, they have never hesitated to pronounce a practical renunciation of Christianity itself.*

And is it not undeniable, that the same authority which renders the Church of England so perfectly schismatical in her character, has recourse to means which are now almost universally denounced as unscriptural and unrighteous in the extreme, for the imposition and support of her clergy ? The State, in these respects, not only claims the liberty and property of its subjects, but even their present well-being and final happiness as within the grasp, and at the disposal, of its powers ! Millions of rational and responsible agents,—agents, who are under laws and immunities, with which no created being has any right to interfere, so as to annul or withhold,—are all under the laws and usages which are employed to support your Church, treated like so many head of cattle in Chertsey Fair, or so many slaves in the West Indies, as *convertible property* ; property that may be bought and sold at pleasure ; who may receive as their master, for the professed purposes of religious instruction,—a creature—the *mere creature of the State*—whom they may never have seen before ; whom, when they have seen and heard, they may abhor in their hearts ; and who, their consciences may tell them, is utterly unfitted for, and undeserving of, the station he holds among them ; or it may be that this very creature, to whose *care*, (I cannot call it religious or spiritual, for both terms would be disgraced by such an association—Church-of-England care, you may call it,) may seldom, if ever, go near the property he has purchased, and into the care of which he may be inducted as its rightful owner : he may receive at a distance, and spend as he pleases, all the " living " that property may afford him ; he may express all that is involved in *his care* by proxy, yea it may so happen that he cannot do otherwise ; for he may have at the same time, two, three, four, or five, similar kinds of property in other places ; " and, consequently, as he cannot be everywhere, he must be somewhere only in the person or persons of his representatives ! " And this, even this mockery of pastoral relationship to the people, " and cure for their souls," is held as one of the most

* See a valuable plea for Catholic Communion in the Church of God, by Dr. Mason, New York ; reprinted and published in London, 1816.

sacred institutions of your Church! This is the merchandise in "the souls of men" held in the Book of Revelations, as characteristic of mystical Babylon—the Church of Rome—a merchandise, to use the words of Mr. Scott, "more cruel and unrighteous than even the accursed slave-trade is; the most infamous of all traffics ever devised by the spirit of avarice!" But, enormous and crying even as this evil is, it is one which may be mitigated or counteracted, by *possible* occurrences; unrighteous men, of the higher orders of your clergy, may have both righteous and pious *underlings*, (I use the word only as declarative of *the system*, and not contemptuously towards the poor curates,) who may be devoted to the best interests of the people, among whom they exercise their delegated superintendence; and thus, notwithstanding the evil of the system, good *may be* promoted by it; but there are other means had recourse to, for the support of the system, which can only be characterised as evil—evil, indeed, which, when put in contrast with that to which we have just referred, must be acknowledged subordinate; yea, even transient, as the interests of time are not to be compared with those of eternity; but still evil, unmixed, without mitigation: I mean the unrighteous, cruel, and wicked tithe exactions of your Church. It is easy of proof, that the Jewish system, so often appealed to for its sanction, bears not the smallest analogy to it, nor gives it the least support; and as to Christianity, it is so utterly subversive of all its dictates, that it will not bear to be named the same day with it. THE FIRST GRANT MADE OF TITHES IN THIS COUNTRY, WAS TO ATONE FOR THE CRIME OF MURDER! Offa, having murdered Ethelbert, king of the East Angles, that he might obtain that kingdom, made this grant to that church, which was always ready to sell indulgences, and "the absolution and remission of sin" to whoever would pay enough for them; and afterwards, the more effectually to ingratiate himself with the sovereign pontiff, engaged to pay him a yearly donation, for the support of an English College at Rome; in order to raise which, he imposed a tax of a penny upon each house worth thirty pence a year: this was afterwards called Peter's pence; but these exactions were not made in Ireland, until Richard, surnamed Strongbow, an earl ready for any desperate enterprise, had rendered the English name terrible, by the havoc and slaughter he there committed; a dread, which may well be felt, even now, in that unhappy country; since, *within the last thirty years, not less than twenty-six thousand persons have been slaughtered for the support of the same system!* It would require, however, a volume to enter into the history of this system, even in outline: I must, therefore, be very brief in my reference to it. When Pope Gregory was asked by Augustine how the oblations of the faithful should be divided, the answer was given, that it was the custom of the apostolic see, to charge bishops when they are ordained, that the whole income be divided into four parts: the first, for the bishop and his family, that he may be able to keep hospitality; the second, for the clergy; the third, for the poor; and the fourth, for repairing the churches. "But, upon the creation of parishes, this division was abandoned, and the three following substituted in its place: the receiver, or incumbent, was obliged to expend one part in repairing, supporting, and adorning his church; another, in entertaining strangers, and relieving the poor; and the remainder was for his own immediate use." Now, whichever of these divisions we take, as the guide of our views upon the subject, it will appear perfectly

harmless, when compared with that system which has now for ages obtained in your Church: *the whole* is now appropriated by the receiver, whether he be the incumbent or not; and for the erection, reparation, or beautifying of churches, parliamentary grants, or parochial exactions are made; for the entertainment of strangers, inns and public-houses, with all the accumulated mass of misery and crime connected with them, are now established; for the support of the poor we have a national burden, (*praised be the church for its endurance!*) of about £8,000,000 annually; and for the support of the incumbent, we have, in addition to tithes, church-fees, or fees of office, almost innumerable! And, of course, for the support of what *you* consider so good a “national covenant,” you would not complain even of this; yea, you would perhaps plead, that it was equally “apostolic,” and received the same high sanction which you assert its offices did; but whether *you* can complain, or apologize, or not, in a little time it will be found of little consequence; the voice of millions must be heard, and that voice will speedily demand the abolition of the whole system! It is so perfectly anti-christian and unrighteous in its character; it gives so much to those who deserve the least; it brings so much scandal upon religion, gives rise to tricks that are so disgraceful to it, and presents such an extensive barrier to its prevalence; it excites so much ill-will among those who ought to love as brethren; creates such endless law-suits, thus aggravating its own expenses, by those of law; checks and embarrasses the labours of the agriculturalist; and, above all, has ruined so many in property, in body, and in soul; that if it be not speedily abolished, if religion be not left free and unfettered—TO THE VOLUNTARY SUPPORT OF THOSE WHO LOVE IT—we may speedily expect that both “Church and State” will be involved together, in one common ruin! The tide of popular opinion is setting in against the system; and all the barriers that oppose the progress of that opinion will be swept away, like hillocks before the Atlantic Ocean: and ultimately, its progress will be marked by the subjection of all things to its own dominion. In this matter, pre-eminently, the voice of the people is the voice of God!

Such an Establishment, and maintained by such means, it may naturally be expected, presents one of the most effectual impediments to the prevalence of Christianity, not only in our own country, but in every part of the world. Of the awful, the soul-ruinous delusions, which her formularies and practices have a direct tendency to generate, we have already informed you; but, independently of these, there is such a variation in her ministry—such a direct interference with the ministerial work, both in the way of direction and restraint; and such an unhallowed, as well as perfectly anomalous influence exerted over all her proceedings, in reference to the propagation of the gospel; that if any good results from it, it must be *notwithstanding* the system, and *not* as its natural and necessary result. Admitting that there are many truly Christian ministers in the Establishment, it is a fact that is equally certain, so soon as they are found out, they become objects of suspicion, distrust, or even opposition; and are liable to be driven hither and thither, at the caprice of the very powers in whose service they have enlisted themselves; or, if they obtain a standing in a place, and God is pleased to bless their labours, they may gain a promotion, (generally the chief object of *all* Church of England men’s ambition,) and be removed from the midst of their people, and another may be appointed over them, who may strive to undo all his predecessor did, and render them

as sheep without a shepherd ; or, if they continue with them, “till death them do part,” the same results may follow ; and no complaints, no entreaties from the destitute flock, for relief, can possibly be heard ; and hence, they must seek another and a better system of religious profession, or wander in the wilderness, without a guide : but, even in the most favourable circumstances in which both ministers and people are placed, the former can do but little good amongst them, in any other than “canonical hours,” or “consecrated places ;” for if they deviate from those hours, or labour in other places, they are liable to entire suspension from their work ; they cannot even imitate the example of their Divine Master, and on an elevation or field, or wherever a convenient place of resort may present itself to them, avail themselves of it to preach the gospel to the poor, without being deemed traitors to their Establishment, and treated accordingly ; nor may they, in any degree, deviate from the forms prescribed by the Act of Uniformity, without similar treatment. And, besides all this, as a Church Establishment, supporting only the religion of the State, it cannot, upon its own principles, advance beyond its own territory, or extend its influence among other nations, with any legitimate prospect of success : for, upon whatever principles an establishment be based, whether of “expediency,” or “utility,” or the “determination of the majority of the people,” the very same principles may, and do fix other establishments,—even Popish, Mahomedan, and Brahminical, in other parts of the world. It is an interference, therefore, with the general laws of policy, now recognised among the nations of the earth, for one establishment of the State of one country, to interfere with the ultimate design of completely overthrowing that of another country ; from whence it must be inferred,—that to be consistent with herself, the Church of England must either renounce her character, and all that she holds most sacred as the means of her support, or else sit down in hopeless despondency of ever spreading the gospel *upon her own principles*. If a “duly authorised clergy” go forth among the heathen, with this object in view, they must forget by *what* they were so “made and ordained” here ; they must renounce their allegiance to the State, to the canon laws, and the prescribed form, to which they have here declared themselves subject ; they must become such kind of moveable preachers as the twelve apostles were, or as the evangelists, Timothy and Titus were,—“men that hazarded,” not their professed principles, for they never placed themselves in connection with any system that was contrary to that religion, which was their directory and support,—but men that hazarded *their lives* for the sake of the gospel, and the salvation of the heathen ; they must throw aside all the trappings and fopperies of a State religion, as useless incumbrances ; and go, in all the plainness and simplicity of an unadorned and defenceless shepherd, after the sheep in the wilderness ; and though the enemy stand against them with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield, (the only true supporters of a State religion,) yet their armour, and defence, and weapon, must be, “the name of the Lord of Hosts.” To be consistent with themselves, therefore, the members of the Establishment must stand opposed to all movements for the propagation of the gospel, at home or abroad, beyond their own sphere. I say not this to give a repulse to what they may have done, or intended to do ; but to prove to them, unanswerably, that to be consistent with themselves, in the support of

missionary exertions abroad, they must become Dissenters from their Establishment at home.*

Yes, Sir, and I am well persuaded, from the signs of the times, and the testimony of eternal truth, that this, in common with every other anti-christian system, must either be purified from all its anti-christian amalgamations, or be completely overturned and destroyed ! It is impossible that truth and error—holiness and sin—divinely and merely humanly authorized forms of religious profession and practice, should obtain equal prevalence in the world, under the sanction of a God of truth, who is necessarily without iniquity ; there must, therefore, be a separation between them, before the former can triumph, and the latter be subdued ; events, that are every where transpiring, are bringing about this separation ; Providence, by these events, is more manifestly declaring it to be necessary ; the predictions of truth, aid the interpretation of providential events, and ere long the proclamations shall be made, “ Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ ! ” And, “ Babylon is fallen, and they shall have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image ; and

* I have felt much regret, that on the formation of an Auxiliary Society, for “ the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign parts,” in this town, about six months ago, I did not openly express my views and convictions of its true character. The truth is, however, that I spoke to the assistant curate of the parish about it, and he answered so decidedly respecting one of my chief objections to it, having been removed by the bishops at the head of it, (*his own amiable temper alone, I am persuaded, led him to believe the truth of it,*) that I let the opportunity slip, which I then had, to state it publicly. I have since, however, ascertained that this report is not correct. It ought now, therefore, to be known what the true nature and design of this Society is, as well as what are its sources of support. It is an incorporated Society, professedly for the propagation of the gospel ; but *this name*, so far from being indicative of its true nature, is a *delusion and a cheat*. It is merely for the introduction and establishment of the same iniquitous system of ecclesiastical imposition and fraud, as obtains in this country. Its reports give no information respecting the conversion of souls, the accession of numbers of living stones to the spiritual temple of Christ through the gospel, nor even expresses much anxiety concerning it ; on the contrary, it is chiefly occupied with details of the movements of their agents, the state of the churches they have built, the church-yards they have enclosed, and the land either possessed or allotted as part of the revenue of their establishments ; and from the whole, any one who is at all acquainted with the religious state of the people, where these establishments are, must know, that missionary labours are done and blessed among them by *other societies*, and not by theirs. Besides, it is a Government Society, and is supported very considerably by parliamentary grants—*annually made*—why, then, should the people be appealed to, to *pay doubly* for its support ? If it were worth supporting at all, the people among whom it extends its *chief* influence, are sufficiently civilized, perhaps, even Christianized, to give it their support ; but their withholding it, and giving their support to other societies, and throwing this upon its own resources at home, is a clear proof how little they regard it abroad. BUT A CURSE HANGS OVER IT. The merchandise of “ slaves and souls of men,” is chargeable to its account ! ! For the last century, three hundred or more slaves have been kept by this professedly *Gospel Society*, upon one of its own estates in the West Indies ! No other efforts than the most zealous abettors and supporters of slavery desire, have been made by this Society, to better the condition of their slaves ; that is to say, when *they think them fit for liberty*, they will grant it ! and as they have never yet so thought concerning any, *all, all*, are yet in bondage ! Can such a Society be expected to prosper ? Can God’s blessing be sought to attend it ? Ought any Christian, who knows and feels that God has shown him “ what is good, and what he requires of him,” to give it his support ? It has been justly said, that “ Taxation and the sword, form the only bond of union between the Church and the State ; ” how much to be deprecated is it then, that this Society should practically teach us, that not the voluntary slavery of the minds of the clergy only, but the intolerable species of forced West Indian slavery also, is essential to its support !

whosoever receiveth the mark of his name!" "And when I seriously reflect," says the amiable and pious Doddridge, "upon this text, and how directly the force of it lies against those who, contrary to the light of their consciences, continue in the communion of the Church of Rome, for secular advantage, or to avoid the terror of persecution, it almost makes me tremble. And I heartily wish that all others, who connive at those things, in the discipline and worship of Protestant churches, which they in their consciences think (and may it not be added, which can be proved to their consciences, if they would lay them open to conviction, by the word of God?) to be *sinful remains of popish superstition and corruption*, would seriously attend to this passage, which is one of the most dreadful in the whole book of God, and weigh its awful contents, that they may keep at the greatest possible distance from this horrible curse, which is sufficient to make *the ears of every one that hears it to tingle*." (Compare Jeremiah xxv. 12—16, with Rev. xiv. 8—11. Read also, from the the 17th to the end of the 20th chap. of Rev.) We know, indeed, what deep roots and lengthened standings both these systems have obtained in the world; we know how much the kings and nobles of the earth,—the rich men and the mighty men, have done, and may do, to aid their perpetuity; and that they may even bring multitudes of people to help their cause; but *all their power united*, when put in opposition to the power of Him who is Head over all things to the church, and has all power in heaven and on earth, and is destined to rule the nations, *shall easily be broken and rendered useless*; and so surely as the walls of Jericho fell down, after the blowing of the rams' horns; so surely as the two-leaved gates of brass were thrown open to facilitate the entrance of Cyrus to Babylon, and the overthrow of its mighty empire of old; so surely as the devoted city of Jerusalem was taken and rased even to the ground,—the power of the Highest fulfilling the accomplishment of these events according to his own predictions; so surely as the church of Christ was established in the world, notwithstanding all the opposition that was raised against it, and has been perpetuated from that period to the present, notwithstanding the moral desolations with which she has been surrounded, and all the efforts which have been made by anti-christian powers to destroy her; so surely as in *any measure* protestantism has triumphed over popery, and puritanism over episcopalianism; *so surely shall the Churches of Rome and England, and every other anti-christian tyranny upon the face of the earth, be completely overthrown*, and give place to the latter-days glory of the church: when the vivifying, and purifying, and morally fertilizing influence of the Sun of Righteousness shall be felt throughout the world! God has decreed it; prophecy has declared it; and events are hastening it on with a rapidity not to be estimated! "And after these things," says the Apostle John, in the apocalyptic vision, "I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory; and he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird! For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye*

receive not of her plagues : for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities !”

Possibly, upon reading this prophetic record, which involves the characteristics and destiny of the Church of England, as plainly as those of the Church of Rome, some may dwell with a kind of consoling satisfaction upon the increase of evangelical religion among the bishops, the clergy, and the members of that Church ; and may say, Surely if ten righteous found in Sodom, would have preserved that devoted city, *these* shall preserve “ *our Church* ” from its predicted destiny ; but let them not flatter themselves too much, nor too long, with these imaginary “ visions of good to be revealed.” What nation was ever more privileged than the Jews ? What city ever seemed more likely to bid defiance to the destruction of ages, or the powers of earth and heaven, than that did ? Yet, when the people had filled up the measure of their iniquities, the Most High visited them as he had told them he would, for all the iniquities which they had committed, and for all the blood which they had shed ; and having demonstrated their weakness before his strength, by the destruction of their city, even when their confidence in heaven for its preservation seemed most entire, he scattered the remnant of them through all nations, to prove to all, what some are so reluctant to admit, when all things seem prosperous with them, “ that there is a God that judgeth in the earth.” THE VOICE OF “ THE SOULS UNDER THE ALTAR ” that have perished, or may now be perishing, through the iniquitous persecutions of the Church of England, as well as those of Rome, MUST BE HEARD : and “ shall not God avenge his own elect, that cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them ? I tell you he will avenge them speedily !—nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh shall he find faith on the earth ?” Besides :—*Light*, said our Lord, *makes manifest* :—whatever enchanting spells, therefore, may be found within or without this mysterious temple, the darkness, pollutions, and abominations of its hidden chambers of imagery, have been, and are now daily being, made manifest ; and as *truth is the best refutation of error* :—when the institutions and formularies, and orders, of this hierarchy are examined by its dictates, their erroneous, sinful, and pernicious character can no longer be denied ; and what must be the issue of such things as these ? Either an increased separation from the Church, or else an alienation of heart from its cherished evils, even while an external conformity to it is kept up ; and who knows not that *a house thus divided against itself, can never stand* ? Were there not, therefore, a single prediction concerning its destiny, on the whole inspired record, *these facts alone* are sufficient to prove that its affairs are reaching a crisis, and that Reformation or Destruction must follow ! “ I think it is evident,” says one of your own clergy, and he no ordinary observer of the affairs of his Church, “ that the cause of dissent has progressed with the increase of evangelical religion among the established clergy ;” and what is the true reason of this ?—Undeniably, that our cause is the cause of God and truth ; and that, in espousing and maintaining it, *we choose to obey God rather than man*. I wonder not, therefore, at the hostility expressed against an evangelical ministry, by the most zealous advocates of their own Church : like the advocates of the Church of Rome, they feel that the ignorance, the moral slumberings, yea, even the spiritual death, of the people is their best support, (for, like the bodies in a grave-yard, they will never disturb each other while they are under the dominion of death,) and, therefore, they would rather have those

clergy among them who will simply tell them, that if they go to church, they will go to heaven ; that church-going and religion are synonymous terms, consequently, that he who is most frequently at church must be most religious ; and that all “ Dissenters are impudent Methodists,” — “ enemies to the Church and State,” and must assuredly at last go, where Church of England men can never go ! And this, even this, is extolled as apostolic preaching, “ according,” (to use your own words,) “ to the Church of God,” and “ the Christian life,” being “ interwoven with the texture of Holy Writ !” Yes, Sir, I say I wonder not at all this ; but *I am truly grieved* that such a state of things should prevail ; that such a moral insensibility should pervade so large a portion of your Church, and influence so deeply its warmest advocates ; for I know, and have felt, what deference is due to God, and God alone ; and as one that hath, I trust, obtained mercy of the Lord, I have felt also the worth of the truth as it is in Jesus ; the absolute expediency and necessity “ of his obedience and death, to hide all my transgressions from view,” and, as one that has been “ deemed faithful, and put into the ministry,” *by the highest authority*, I have felt also the worth of the soul’s salvation, and the utility of the application of all the means which God has appointed for its accomplishment ; and, above all, the indispensable necessity of *preaching with the Apostles*, “ not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and ourselves, your servants for Jesus’ sake.” Believe me, therefore, *that with heart-felt grief* I read your denunciation of an evangelical ministry, on the thirty-second page of your Letter : “ They unite,” you say, “ with the avowed enemies of that Establishment of which they profess themselves to be members, and thereby virtually encourage defection from the Church. There is, moreover, a style of preaching, adopted by some teachers, which exhibits the doctrine of the cross, and is dignified by the name of gospel preaching. That which appears to them to fall short of this doctrine, is termed useless speculation, unedifying research, and a departure from the gospel.” It would be of no utility to show, how utterly inconsistent this passage is, with other passages, and especially that on the Sacrament, on the 26th page of your Letter ; it requires other kind of animadversion, upon which I must enter, if with grief on your account, yet without reluctance, because of its obvious necessity.

The clearing away of the encumbrances which obscured and even nullified the utility of the doctrine of the cross, and its exhibition to the world in all its glory, was one of the greatest advantages resulting from the Reformation ; or, to speak more correctly, the advancement of the Church from the darkness of popery to the light of protestantism ; and this same doctrine, how much soever it may be despised or abused by the wise men of this world, is still found the sum and substance of the gospel, the testimony of God himself concerning the mediation of Christ : upon these two points, therefore, I hope you will excuse me, if I attempt to give you some information, which you either appear not to have possessed, or at least not to have sufficiently regarded.

With the priesthood and members of the Church of Rome, the ritual, decrees, and orders, of the Church were every thing ; and though portions of the Scriptures were permitted to be used, yet the Church claimed to itself the power of interpretation ; and thus the practice was formed, which is still kept up by your Church, of the people standing up when the gospel is read, and sitting down when

the epistle is read; thereby intimating the *possibility* of the people understanding the former, but that the latter *required* their submission as learners, instead of judges, of the faith. Nor was this the worst bondage to which the people were subjected. The doctrine of human merit was sedulously taught among them; and, as the whole Church was said to be in subjection to God's vicar upon earth, so all the blessings of heaven were represented as at *his* disposal; and, consequently, that auricular confession, penance, and offerings to the Church, were necessary for the "absolution and remission" of sin. Nor was even this the worst state of their bondage. If the sinner were so favoured, as to obtain from the Church the "absolution and remission" he needed, or sought, he was still held subject to a temporal punishment, the measure or continuance of which, was determinable by its own power, and *that* not in this life only, but in another, after the dissolution of the body, called purgatory also. Exalted privileges, therefore, were to be had in both worlds, by the favour, the indulgences, and absolutions, of the Pope and his emissaries. But who sees not in all these bondages, (and the outline of their ramifications is far from being complete,) that this Church arrogated to itself the exclusive prerogative of God? for who can forgive sins but God only? and who can determine the method of the bestowment, and the means of the security, of forgiveness, but God only? The Scriptures would easily have answered these inquiries in the affirmative; but these they were careful to shut up from the people; so soon, therefore, as the Reformers brought them to the light, they laid the axe to the root of this tree of corruption, cut off the chief sources of its support, and lopped off its most pernicious branches; the trunk and the tap-root still remaining in the earth; in other words, they brought to light, what Luther denominated, the doctrine of a standing or falling church, the fundamental doctrine of our holy religion, the doctrine of justification by faith alone in the atoning sacrifice of a once crucified, but now risen and exalted Redeemer! This was the doctrine upon which alone they *felt*, as well as taught, that the hopes of man could rest in safety. This was the only refuge, to which they could direct the burdened conscience to secure relief. And this was the only medium through which they could proclaim emancipation from the thralldom of ignorance, the drudgeries of superstition, and the bondage of corruption, and an introduction to "the glorious liberty of the children of God."

Need I, then, multiply arguments to prove the importance of this doctrine? especially to one who holds his Church to be so truly apostolic, as not to need even the light of Scripture to "illustrate" its character, or prove its sufficiency, for the salvation of all who trust in it? I wish not to weary, even if I multiply arguments in its favour, but I will be brief. As the divine law was given to human nature in its purity, so it was from the nature that had transgressed that law, that justice had a claim, and demanded satisfaction. This claim, therefore, must be satisfied, either in the person of the sinner, or of a substitute; but who was to determine how this satisfaction was to be secured? not the transgressor, for as such he could not be a judge in his own cause; nor any of the superior orders of created beings, for it is not permitted them, except under the direction of Him who made them, to interfere in a matter between man and his Maker; only He, therefore, whose laws had been broken, and who alone could estimate the true nature and proper desert of such an offence, could determine this;

and the annunciation of the method of its accomplishment, constitutes the exclusive boast and treasure of the Scriptures, and is emphatically the way of salvation. By this means, what was before confused, is reduced to order; every part is invested with its intrinsic importance, and brought to bear upon the present accomplishment and final issues of "the purpose of grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began." And though you, Sir, may think that the "doctrine of the cross" does not deserve to be dignified by the name of "gospel preaching," permit me to assure you, *that no other doctrine is found in the gospel*; that this is the sun of the system, from which every ray of truth and grace proceeds, which is destined to enlighten, and vivify, and fertilize a benighted, and sinful, and dying world; and that nothing is to be gathered up, either from the Old or New Testament, of a saving tendency, only in so far as it forms a part of "the truth, as it is in Jesus:"—

"A truth so strange, 'twere bold to think it true,
If not far bolder still to disbelieve."

What else can be made of all the promises, predictions, and sacrificial, as well as ceremonial, observances of the Old Testament economy, if it were not to prepare the minds of those that lived under it for the reception, and to introduce to the world, ultimately, the knowledge of the great atonement, and all the purifying and peace-giving influence resulting from it, which once in the end of the world should be made for sin? If thus considered, every institution then had its significance; but, if viewed in any other light, the whole appears a mass of unmeaning ceremonies, as unworthy the benevolence, as they were of the wisdom, of their heavenly Author. And what does the New Testament teach us, but *the same doctrine*, only in clearer, more comprehensive, and impressive forms of speech? Nothing short of this was deemed an object worthy the humiliation, and sufferings, and death of the Son of God. This, therefore, we are taught, was the object he had in view, in his first interposition on the behalf of sinful man, on his assumption of the nature of man, and all the offices which his mediatorial work required him to sustain; and from the accomplishment of this one object, nothing could divert his attentive, steady, and vigorous pursuit! The whole of his undertakings and sufferings, as well as their results, were clearly foreseen by himself; and when the grand crisis arrived, the hour when the great Sacrifice was to be offered up, and the ransom paid for the liberty of the sons of God, "Father," said he, "*the hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified! Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say?*" Shall I draw back from that scene of suffering, from which humanity recoils? Shall I urge the petition which my feeble flesh put into my mouth,—"*Father, save me from this hour?*" If it be possible, let sinners be saved in some other way; or let them perish, rather than I should suffer so much:—No! I cannot bear the thought, "*but for this cause came I unto this hour!*" Now, notwithstanding the sufferings, and ignominy, and accursed death to which I must be subjected, "*now is the judgment of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out; and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me!*" And when nailed to the cross, and expiring amidst the darkness of nature, and the convulsions of the world, he cried out, "It is

FINISHED." Yes! The great work, which the Father had given him to do, was finished; the sacrificial appointment, the great atonement, the equitable foundation of man's salvation, was finished; "*the Father glorified the Son, that the Son also might glorify him.*" And hence, this wondrous theme became the great topic of the apostolic ministry. "*Thus,*" said the great Mediator, after he had suffered upon the cross, and was raised from the dead, and was about to enter into his glory, "*thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.*" "*Therefore,*" said Peter, on the memorable day of Pentecost, "*let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.*" "*We preach Christ crucified,*" said Paul, "*unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.*" On another occasion, when contending with those who would have perverted the gospel of Christ, and mix its simple institutions with the beggarly elements of the world, he exclaimed, "*God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world!*" And it was the preaching of this doctrine, *the doctrine of the cross*, involving, as it necessarily must, all the other doctrines and influences of Christianity, that became the grand means, in the hands of its heavenly Author, of enlightening the minds, and softening the hearts, and sanctifying the natures, of the inhabitants of the most barbarous regions, as well as, what were reputed, the most civilized nations on the first establishment of Christianity in the world. And it is the preaching of the same doctrine in the present day, that enlightens the most vacant countenances with the feelings of the deepest interest, that draws tears from eyes that have been unused to weep,—that raises those who were once dead in trespasses and sins, to a life of faith, and righteousness, and peace,—and that unites those who were once hateful, and hating one another, in the bonds of fraternal affection and Christian love, and urges a regard to their common privileges and obligations on earth, as exclusively preparatory to the consummation of their desires and blessedness in heaven: and, therefore, I add, upon the surest grounds of expectation, that this doctrine shall continue to exert its attractive, transforming, and heaven-securing influence, in opposition to all the powers of earth and hell, until the last "*vessel of mercy,*" found on this side of eternity, shall be safely lodged in the realms of everlasting bliss!

Fain would I hope, Sir, that you knew not what you said, nor whereof you affirmed, when you wrote so contemptuously of the doctrine of the cross! Fain would I hope, that you did it inadvertently, and not in unbelief; and that the same doctrine may yet become, if it be not now, the foundation of your hope of acceptance with God, and of happiness in heaven! You have arrived at that period of human life when ignorance, and unbelief, and all delusion upon a doctrine of such absorbing interest, should either be renounced or overcome; when truth should be received in all its purity, and yielded to in all its power. You boast of *your church*, but let me tell you plainly, that it is not *your*, nor any other church, that can save your soul! Salvation is of the Lord. He alone is able to save even unto the very uttermost. Neither is

there salvation in any other. O! venture not the salvation of your immortal soul; launch not into the ocean of eternity, upon the broken planks of systems, creeds, and formularies, of men's devising! Were all the Lord's Spiritual to draw up, and introduce an Act of Parliament, to-morrow night, into the House of Lords, for your salvation; and it were to pass that, and the lower House, and receive the king's assent the same night, it would, in such an affair, be completely powerless: it could not, by any use or process of application, ever accomplish it. Your dependance, therefore, upon *your Church*, implicit as I know that dependance to be upon *that Church*, which is a mere creature of Parliament, was made, as I have told you, by one Act, and may be unmade again by another of its Acts; *this creature* cannot save you; and if you have not a better ground upon which to rest your hope in your dying hour, your hope will prove like a spider's web, and the disappointment which must follow, you may imagine, but I cannot describe! But never shall you have it in your power to say, that no friend warned you of your danger. I solemnly warn you now. I tell you plainly, the only way of salvation for guilty man is by the cross of Christ. He is our only shelter from avenging justice. His atonement is the only ground of our acquittal from condemnation; and it is only through his righteousness and grace we can obtain whatever is needful to sanctify our natures, and fit us for everlasting life! Believe, then, in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved! Faith is the only bond of union with Him, as the head of vital influence to the church, which he hath purchased with his own most precious blood! Faith unveils the mysteries of redemption, and the glories of eternity; and, becoming the anchor to hope, enables the soul to rise and enter within the veil! And faith, thus fixed and operating, will overcome the world, will triumph over death, and become the pledge of immortal bliss!

But, possibly, this may be deemed a digression: if it be so, it is a most important one, and one which enters into all the principles and expectations which go to form the Christian character; and, consequently, involves the perpetuity of the Christian church in the world. Without faith in Christ alone we cannot be saved. Without faith it is impossible to please God. Without faith we cannot yield to the call of God, given through and by the ministration of the gospel; and so come out from the world, and be separate from it, as that He may receive us, and be a Father unto us, and we may become the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. It is the God of hope himself that must fill us with all joy and peace *in believing*. It is our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, that must comfort our hearts, and stablish us in every good word and work; *and thus yielding ourselves unto God, we shall receive one another in love, as Christ also hath received us, to the glory of God*. This will unite us together "as a congregation of faithful men." This will urge our observance of the Sabbath; our meetings together with one accord in one place; and our habitual regard to all the public, as well as private, means which God has appointed for our salvation. This will invest us with the privileges of the city and church of the living God. This demands of us the remembrance of those who are the only proper officers of this holy state of laws and immunities. It teaches us to select for the pastoral office, for the bishopric of our souls' concerns, men of honest report, who have obtained mercy of the Lord, and whose gifts, by him

conferred, prove them able to teach others also. With equal precision it directs us in the selection of deacons; and how we may first prove them, before we suffer them to use the office of a deacon, being first found blameless. All other offices, besides these, it urges us to reject; being utterly subversive of the order of the gospel, anti-christian in their character, pernicious to the church, and destructive to the souls of men. This also teaches us, not indeed how “to make,” but to set apart, designate, and appoint, these officers of the true church, by fasting and prayer, and the ministration of the word, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. This also instructs or urges *them* to regard the instructions already given in the discharge of their duties towards the people of their charge; and *the people*, on the other hand, in those they owe to the officers who are set over them in the Lord—the bishops and deacons of their choice. And this also forms a bond of union between the officers and members of a particular church in one place, and those of another in another place; for never can they be cut off from, though they are independent of, each other; and, therefore, when they meet together, they can hold interesting and useful communion together, by their observance of similar ministrations, institutions, and exertions, for the benefit of each other, the churches generally, and the family of man universally. In the movement, therefore, of such a machinery as this, for the individual welfare and the common prosperity, there is no difficulty. THE WHOLE MULTITUDE OF THEM THAT BELIEVE ARE OF ONE HEART AND ONE SOUL. All excitements to covetousness, ambition, or unrighteous domination, are removed out of the way. A holy jealousy of individual right and collective privilege and obligation, pervades every member of this multitude. In the event of offence, or occurrence of evil, a simple but sufficient provision, accessible and manageable by all, is made for its correction; a power intrusted by the Lord for edification, not for destruction. By this all tyranny is restrained; individual cases of grievance or wrong are redressed; liberty, peace, and prosperity are secured. No system of truth, or duty, or Articles of Religion of merely human regulation, are imposed upon this multitude: the Bible only is recognised as the standard of their faith and practice; and therefore all equivocation, perjury, and present or future violation of principle or connexion, is avoided. The same men, under this influence, every where sustain the same character; and he who is a Christian here is capable of being known and acknowledged as a Christian every where. Our missionaries or evangelists belong not to one class here, and another among the heathen; they are precisely the same men, under the influence of the same principles, and no where losing their identity as the members of the same church. Freed from impositions here, they have none to impose elsewhere. Strangers to extortionate and fluctuating burdens, and “worldly sanctuaries” here, they neither impose nor countenance them elsewhere. Having only the glorious gospel of the blessed God, and the blessings which are every where destined to follow its extension and influence, to impart, they feel their dependance upon Him, who has put it into their trust, and given them the ability to use it for his honour and the salvation of their fellow-men; they are satisfied with what he is pleased to impart, and are well assured that not one thing shall fail them of all the good things which the Lord our God has spoken concerning them. They labour not for the meat that perisheth. They lay not up for themselves treasures upon earth. They give themselves not to filthy

lucre. Their bread is imperishable. Their treasures are inexhaustible. Their gain is godliness with contentment. Great is their peace in time; and certain their happiness in eternity. Their record is on high. Their names are written in heaven. And the memory of their characters, their prayers, and exertions, is blessed,—and blessed with immortality.

But no other church, beside that which is Christian, admits of such a description as this. Its simplicity is its beauty, its grandeur, its glory. Its adaptation to the condition of man; its useful and benevolent influence over his mind and character, and all his relationships and connexions in life, are unique and unequalled. Its principles and practices are wholly independent of, and infinitely superior to, all the civil and religious institutions of the world. IT IS EMPHATICALLY A KINGDOM NOT OF THIS WORLD. It neither prescribes nor unites itself with any political institutions; nor interferes with any that are found to exist. It demands a separation from every secular alliance, and all unhallowed and coercive measures for its support. And as it came down from heaven, its great design is to conduct its genuine subjects thither.

O! what would this and every nation of the earth become, were the church of Christ allowed her unbiassed influence over them! But, alas! almost every where this influence is fettered and restrained. Ever since the Church was united with the State, men's views have been distorted, perverted, and misdirected, concerning its true character; and even you, Sir, declare, that the state of France, and many parts of the continent of Europe, and even America, proves that a pure form of Christianity cannot exist without being the accredited religion of the State. Comment upon such language, as it regards its author, is unnecessary; every one must deplore the blindness and prejudice in which it originates. IN FRANCE, indeed, EQUAL LIBERTY has but just been realized. Pure and undefiled religion, except in Protestant districts, has only now begun to breathe. Antichrist has only now been shaken to his foundations, and left to totter to his destined ruin. Infidelity only begins to blush and hide her diminished head. A little company only, out of the multitude of the priests, have become obedient to the faith. The minds of the people are only just moving in their inquiries after the true character of Christ, and the signs of his coming. But the banner of the cross has been unfurled. The gospel in its purity has begun to be preached. Education, Bible, Tract, and Evangelical Societies have been established. The good work, thanks be to Him who ruleth among the nations! has been begun. The times are altering. The character of the people is changing; and all the moral movements in that valley of vision are in favour of the cause of God and his truth! So much for your first proof; but more of this anon. IN AMERICA better things have already appeared, and in unequalled abundance. America has always been to Europeans the land of freedom. It became the retreat of freedom to the Puritans of our own country, under the unrighteous and cruel domination of the Stuarts. There they secured, not only their liberty, but their religion; and God has prospered them. Peopled, indeed, by men of other countries, and other persuasions, they have been mixed in their character. But the chaff has been separated from the wheat. The church has come out from the world; and the wilderness and solitary place has rejoiced on account of it; and even the desert has begun to blossom as the rose. *The Spirit has been poured out from on high upon them, in measures*

unequalled since apostolic times. Churches have, in consequence, proportionably prospered; the labours of their ministers have been more extensively blessed; the prayers of the people, united with those of their ministers, (presented, not according to prescribed forms, for they have none, but according to their peculiar states, wants, and circumstances,) have been answered in the bestowment of unmeasured blessings upon the heads and hearts of every one of them. Eyes, unused to weep, have now learned to mourn for sin. Conviction has been followed by conversion; and conversion by holiness and happiness of life. No lions are there. The ravenous beasts prowl not around to seize any as their prey. False prophets, pretenders to miraculous gifts, and teachers of lies, are rejected there. Their religion is sought for, and found, in the Bible, and those only who subject themselves to its guidance and influence. From the sacred treasury of the Scriptures only are they furnished with spiritual armour, on the right hand and on the left; and these become to them "the sword of the Spirit," by which they may cut off his enemies and their own. Their Universities and "schools of the prophets," are seats of virtue and religion, as well as of learning. The work of God prevails among them, and is magnified by them. And from thence the word of the Lord is spreading in all directions; and in every place their faith to God-ward is spread abroad!

Would to God that such a state of things prevailed in our own country! It has, indeed, "its saving clauses," but not enough to redeem it from the charge of general, and, in many respects, even of highly aggravated delinquency. It has, indeed, what is called a reformed religion, but mixed with so much that is erroneous, anti-christian, and sinful, as to be almost equivalent to no reform at all. The chief advantage resulting from it was the translation and circulation of the Scriptures of Truth. These enkindled and kept alive the flame of pure and undefiled religion—the religion for which the Reformers first, and afterwards the Puritans, stood and stand distinguished. These taught them to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and for those liberties which are the inalienable rights of man. At first, indeed, they believed they might, consistently with their principles, continue their connexion with the Church, "as by law established;" but, despairing of liberty in such a connexion, and being persecuted for their more rigid regard to the Word of God than the institutions of men, they withdrew from that Church, and pushed their principles to their legitimate consequences, and began to discern the impropriety of all religious establishments whatever; a sentiment in which they are now universally united. The claimants of liberty for themselves, they were most ready to concede it to others. Their whole history testifies their attachment to the constitution of their country; and Hume himself—the apologist of the Stuarts—was compelled to acknowledge, that during the most tyrannical parts of their reigns, the only spark of liberty kept alive in the country was preserved by the Puritans! By successive struggles, they have freed themselves from the pressure of almost every tyranny; and, if they are true to their principles and profession, there is not a right remaining unconceded which they may not now demand from the State, and it will be granted. Their character is now too well known, and too extensively acknowledged, for any to dare to deny that they are the best supporters of religion and liberty in the land. They have proved themselves the best benefactors of their country. Her noblest institutions owe their origin and chief support to them. Bible,

Tract, Missionary, and Educational Societies, and Asylums most needed by the wretched of the family of man, have risen and flourished, and been blessed abundantly, through their instrumentality. Their opponents did nothing toward the support of these or similar institutions, till they were provoked by their zeal. Their ministers and churches have multiplied, and every where spread abroad, till now they form the majority of the nation as a body of religious profession! *But what can we say for the Church of England?* Alas! like the Church of Rome, it has made the nation groan under civil and ecclesiastical exactions, which it knows not how to bear. These it has not hesitated to pervert to other purposes than those for which they were originally claimed. Deviations from original concessions, have been even established as matters of right and law. The Church is involved with the State, as the State with the Church, in its multiplication of laws, until iniquities, untold and incalculable, have been established by law.* The Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and their nominees and supporters in the House of Commons, daring no longer to persecute the Puritans, but only to trouble them in trivial and vexatious forms, have glutted their thirst for the lives as well as the souls of their fellow-men, by penal enactments which now form the most sanguinary code of laws in the world!† Oaths without number have been so interwoven with all the arrangements and impositions of our government, till the distinctions between him that sweareth and him that feareth an oath, are now almost merged! and profanity has become the common characteristic of Englishmen. The clergy have hereby been united with the people, and the people with the clergy, in the indulgence and practice of iniquity, and *what will they do in the end thereof?* Now the majority of the people being Roman Catholic or Protestant Episcopalians, are awfully deluded in reference to their *true interests*. The very men who are bound to undeceive them, being themselves deceived, are those who find it to be their whole interest, as it regards this world at least, to carry on the delusion. Instead, therefore, of advancing as we ought to have done, in improvement, prosperity, and happiness, we are as a nation abounding in crime---rolling in distress with perplexity, and miserable now, our present miseries, unless the mercy of God prevent, will only prove the awful prelude to our future woes! You indeed, Sir, deplore, you tell

* "No man of political sagacity, or of any ordinary share of moral sympathy, can contemplate the present state of our laws, without being forcibly struck with the oppressive burdens they impose upon individuals, and the numerous evils they occasion to the community at large. The fact is, that the whole legal fabric of this country is weakened and endangered by its own enormous weight. Conceive of a system of civil jurisprudence occupying five-and-twenty quarto volumes; add to these three hundred thick octavo volumes of reports, containing the decisions of the judges, which now constitute a new, distinct, and permanent code of laws; and then consider, that this system, already too complicated and immense either to be understood or read, is receiving continual accessions from new legislative enactments, and by the fresh decisions which are perpetually taking place in our courts of law; and I ask, what must be the natural and ultimate consequence of all this? Common sense dictates the appropriate answer,—either reformation or ruin."—See *An Appeal to the Clergy, especially the Bishops and Dignitaries, on the State of Religion, Morals, and Manners, in the British Metropolis*. Published by Holdsworth, 1831.

† "It is a melancholy truth," says Blackstone, "that among the variety of actions that men are daily liable to commit, no less than *one hundred and sixty* have been declared, by Act of Parliament, to be felonies worthy of instant death." Since his time, I have been informed, the number has increased to *two hundred and forty*! and our revenue laws, at one time, contained no less than seventy-five capital enactments, the most of which had become obsolete, through their impracticable severity. Thus,

me in your Letter, the want of zeal for our *National Establishment*, commensurate with that which was evinced forty years ago; and seem to triumph in thinking that it survived the shock which the Revolution of "infidel France" might then have given it: but assuredly, all such sorrows and triumphs may easily be proved to be out of place; for is it not undeniable, that it was under the *National Establishment* of France, and the extortions, spoliage, and plunderings of property, and the invasions of the civil and religious rights of man, that were made for the support of that Establishment, that almost the whole country degenerated from the forms of Christianity to those of infidelity? Had it been AFTER her revolution that this became her character, then, possibly, a plea for an Establishment might be urged, at least with the *shadow* of plausibility; but as it was before---and since equal liberty has been established, every movement of the people's minds has been in favour of Christianity, rather than against it---the plea is utterly groundless! And it is equally undeniable, that it is under a similar Establishment, supported by similar means, that our countrymen have descended to that aggravated state of impiety, profaneness, and crime, for which, as a nation, we now stand distinguished; and which threaten to involve the pious with the profane, the innocent with the guilty, in one common ruin! "The Church *is* in danger," says one, and in danger from itself! It begins to be known, and in proportion as it is known, the danger increases. Every movement among the nations, any cloud raised by their advance and their activity, is dreaded by its supporters as big with the elements of certain destruction. It is *of the world*, and, *therefore*, the convulsions of the world alarm it. It depends upon *it* for its existence. Its basis, if it can be called such, is the shifting sand of political prescription, and not the rock of Divine authority;" and, therefore, like the house built upon the sands, however loftily it may have risen, broadly it may have extended itself, or magnificently it may be ornamented,—it must in the issue fall, and great, though awful, will be the fall thereof!

our legislature, like quacks in the medical profession, have shown, that it is much easier to extirpate than to amend mankind. They have indulged their ease, and endeavoured to conceal their ignorance, by neglecting the curative process entirely, and making a liberal use of the exterminating knife. For ages past, multitudes, whose offences were of inferior degrees of guilt, and who, under the treatment of a judicious penal regimen, would have been restored to moral health, and have become good and useful members of society, have perished, the pitied victims of their remorseless ignorance and unscientific butchery. The grave has covered the offences of their victims, but what mountain can cover the crimes of the inhuman legislators! Those crimes stand rubric against their memories in the volumes of our penal laws,—laws written not with ink, but with blood, as if the law-makers had been emulous of the execrable fame of Draco, whose ensanguined laws the Athenians erased from the books of their republic, but saved his name from oblivion, to float it as a warning down the stream of an odious immortality! (See the Tracts published by the Society for the diffusion of information on the subject of Capital Punishments.) And surely, when we consider, not merely the inefficient, but the unrighteous, oppressive, and cruel character of the legislative enactments of our country, and the increase of crime, notwithstanding those and other enactments, an increase that *exceeds* 270 per cent., the increase of the population?—when we consider the degenerate, licentious, and impious manners and habits of those classes in society, that scarcely make any profession of religion, and how extensively anti-christian, or any *forms* of religion, are substituted for an experimental acquaintance with its power, we may cease to be surprised at the "distress with perplexity" that is coming on the nation. Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? It is time for thee, Lord, to work, for *the wicked have made void thy law*.

Thus, Sir, have I *attempted* a reply to your Letter; and, however feeble has been my advocacy of the cause I have espoused, it has, at least, this one merit, that *it has been sincere*—the result of deep and lengthened conviction—and a conviction induced, not by systems of men's devising, but what I believe to be the truth of God; and is urged upon your own, and the regard of those before whom what I write may appear,—not from the love of party, but of the unbiassed influence of Christianity in the world. The aspect of our civil and religious affairs, nationally, is indeed gloomy and portentous; but still, I trust, Reformation is not only needed, but within our reach! Let us steadily pursue it! Let us reckon no difficulties too great to be surmounted, which may lie in the way of its attainment! And as it must begin somewhere, let it begin with ourselves! Let us repent and return unto the Lord our God—it may be, that he will turn away from us the fierceness of his anger! Let HIS WORD ALONE be the rule, and HIS HONOUR the end, of all our proceedings! Let us attach ourselves supremely to Him—His truth—His ways—His people—and devoutly and sedulously aim to excite similar attachments in the hearts of others! To the throne of His grace, let us bear, in our prayers, our own, and the true interests of others,—our wives, our children, and all with whom we may have any connexion and influence in life! Then may we not only expect to be blessed, but made a blessing! The spirit of Reformation thus evinced, will prove the pledge of its diffusion. The little leaven cast into the mass of unkneaded dough, will leaven the whole lump. All classes will ultimately be affected by the sacred influence; the little one shall become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation—the Lord hastening it in its time!

And with best wishes and prayers for your real welfare,

I remain,

Your obliged and faithful friend and servant,

THOMAS SCHOFIELD.

ADDLESTONE, NEAR CHERTSEY,
5th January, 1832.



APPENDIX.

It was very remote from the writer's intention or wish that the following letter should appear in print. It was written under the excitement of the hour, after the perusal of a kind of circular letter, which Admiral Stirling had published, and even during the leisure moments which the writer could rescue from his employ with the youth intrusted to his tuition, and without the most distant idea of its being received, or answered, in any other manner than as a private letter from a friend, requiring only private and friendly consideration. To his utter astonishment, however, it was in a few months answered, by a printed letter of five and thirty pages in length; and it is on account of the very unfair representations that are therein given of it, that he now feels imperiously called upon to publish it. On which side the power of reasoning and the support of truth may be, our respective readers may judge for themselves. The advantage of leisure, for research, reflection, and composition, has unquestionably always been *on one side*; the Author of the foregoing Reply to the Admiral's Letter having only the leisure of one evening (rarely two evenings) in a week, to compose the greater part of it; that part from the examination of the Articles only being composed, and the whole fairly copied and revised for the press, *since his vacation commenced*. He would not mention these circumstances, *in addition to the labours of his ministerial employment*, if he did not hope that it may prove an ample apology for whatever may appear deficient or defective in his reasonings or pleadings in favour of the cause he has espoused. Conscious only of truth and integrity in what he has advanced, he commends the whole to the candid and devout consideration of his readers, and the blessing of God!

ADDLESTONE, MAY 30TH, 1831.

MY DEAR SIR,

I was last week favoured with a sight of the Letter you have recently printed and put into circulation, upon some points connected with the fundamental articles of our holy religion; and as they must always be dear to the heart of every Christian, and minister of Christ, you will not, perhaps, feel surprised to hear, that my attention was much excited by the observations you have made upon them; and though my inclination would lead me to make a lengthened reply, yet the very few moments of leisure I can seize from other necessary occupations will not allow me to make it; and rather would I spend an

hour in conversation with you, than write at all. But as I must infer, from what you have written, that you consider the happiness of eternity dependant upon the religious influence experienced in time, you will not, I persuade myself, from what I know of the urbanity of your manners, and the kindness of your heart, deem it uncourteous, unfriendly, or unchristianlike, in me, if I venture to suggest, in few words, wherein I think you err; and how that which is defective in your views may be corrected, and that which is deficient supplied. At the same time, I beg you to bear in mind the fact, that *I have not a copy of your Letter by or before me*; and therefore I trust solely to my recollection of the points in it to which I wish to refer.

You set off with at least the tacit acknowledgment of the truth of Chillingworth's declaration, that "the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants;" but you seem almost immediately to overturn the position, by representing a something else, as essential to the formation of a truly religious character; in other words, the salvation of the soul; and this, you think, is found in the institutions, creeds, and formularies, of the Church of England. Now, give me leave to say in reply, that either the Bible is, what it claims to be, "able," sufficient, to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus Christ, or it is not. If it be, then your representation is erroneous; for most plainly it declares for itself, that nothing human can add to its weight, or worth, or utility; and if it be not sufficient, then do ye want a standard by which we may "prove all things, and hold fast that which is good;" and since all human institutions, authorities, and opinions, are, from the mere imperfection of human nature, unavoidably varied and varying, we must still be in a state of uncertainty, whether we ought to submit to the dictates of the Bible, or the dictates of men; and, like the heathen of old, whose philosophers furnished them with many excellent rules of life, and hopes of future happiness, but could never agree among themselves in what they should consist, we must, with all our supposed advantages derived from the Bible, acknowledge ourselves in the darkness of uncertainty, and the mere expectants of a brighter day. Receiving, then, as I apprehend we are bound to do, by an authority too exalted to be for a moment disputed, the sacred volume, as furnishing us with the only correct standard of our faith, and guide of our conduct; as opening to us the only true sources of consolation, and prospects of immortality; it becomes no less obligatory upon us, to examine with a scrupulous, and jealous, and even *suspicious minuteness*, every thing that is presented to us by creatures like ourselves, however eminent or insignificant their character may be,—for our assent, or consent, our faith, our practice, our hope, or our life. Permit me, therefore, to recommend for your diligent and prayerful perusal, the following passages of Scripture, in confirmation of these views, as of pre-eminent importance and utility. Psalm xix. 7—10; John v. 39—41; 1 Thess. v. 20, 21; 2 Tim. i. 13, and iii. 16, 17; 1 Peter iv. 10, 11; 2 Peter i. 16—21; and Revelation xxii. 18—20.

Possibly, you may here be ready to suppose, that by these pleadings for the supreme authority of the inspired volume, I am setting aside the institutions of the Christian Church; and particularly, the importance and utility of the Christian ministry;—by no means! But who knows not, that for our knowledge of the peculiarities of both, we are indebted to the Scriptures themselves? These teach us whom we

ought ever to regard as the exclusive Head of the Church; by whose authority and support, her institutions receive their sanction; and in whose gift, apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are; and what is the design of their bestowment,—viz. “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” &c. (See Ephesians iv. 7—16.) It is not, therefore, to the direction, appointment, or authority of man, that the Christian ministry owes its origin, its support, or continuance; but to those of Christ himself. By *his* providence, *his* word, *his* Spirit, *He* selects, qualifies, sends forth, sustains, and continues, a succession of faithful men, “who shall be able to teach others also:” and these are found in *His* Church, in every part of the world, where those that are the true members of that Church are to be found; according to his own promise, “I will give them pastors after mine own heart:” and if He gives them, it is evident that they need neither secular authority, nor mitred brows, nor University influence, for their support, or sanction, or warrant to instruct; for all that is necessary for them, He will impart; and as He holds them as stars in his right-hand, he will fix them in their station,—he will give them their work to do,—and, above all, *He will furnish them with the materials for doing it!* But where, think you, are these materials to be found? in the commentaries of the learned, in the writings of the fathers, in the decrees, decisions, or directions, of assumed heads of churches, councils, or convocations? or, by any immediate manifest or continuous revelation from heaven? I find not so! “Thou shalt speak my words unto them:” “Go, ye,” said the Great Head of the Church, “and preach the gospel:” “We,” said the apostle, and in so saying, he spoke representatively of every minister of the gospel, “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.” Ministers themselves, then, are subject to the Bible, *and the Bible only*; and it is at their peril to teach, or preach, or inculcate upon the people, any thing that is not plainly found in it, expressly founded upon it, or fairly deducible from it! While, then, we plead for the ministry, it must be one only according to the gospel. Hence we find, hearers are commended for receiving the word from their teachers, even though inspired, much more if uninspired, because of its accordance with the written word, which they previously had in their hands. (See Acts xvii. 11, 12.)

Will you, then, my dear Sir, excuse me if I say, that I fear it is owing to a want of a sufficiently deferential regard to the dictates of the inspired volume, that you have advanced so many statements, or opinions, which I cannot but regard as utterly subversive of the faith and holiness of the gospel? You plainly assert for the Church of England, what others assert for the Church of Rome,—what the members of no other denominations of professing Christians assert for the communities to which they belong,—that there can be no salvation for any not belonging to it! But allow me to ask, Who gave the Church of Rome or of England, (both schismatical in my view, from their own peculiar designation, *the true Church being Christian exclusively*,) who gave either of them, I ask, the power to save, which they claim, or the pretensions to which they put forth? By what title do they hold it? By what deed of conveyance was it granted them? The whole scheme of salvation, as made known in the Bible, teaches me, that in this momentous matter, the MOST HIGH, whose exclusive prerogative it is to save or leave to destruction, putteth

no trust in his servants, and chargeth even his angels with folly ! That HE so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life ! And that in virtue of the mediatorial work of Christ, as well as his equality with the Father, HE is able to save, even unto the very uttermost, all that, come unto God by him ; and that therefore, the inspired Apostles for themselves, as well as others, must have spoken truth, (and whatever accords not with it must be erroneous,) when they said, “ the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man, appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us ; by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus iii. 4—7.) Oh ! but then *your Church* tells us that *baptism is regeneration* ; and it commands its ministers to commit those that have been baptized according to its formularies to the tomb, whether they were truly pious, and died in the faith, or were positively profane and infidel, in “ the sure and certain hope of their resurrection to eternal life,” &c.

The question for our consideration, however, upon these points is,—What saith the Scriptures ? Now, they teach us, that baptism is the initiatory ordinance of the Christian Church ; and, as it is called the “ circumcision of Christ,” we are warranted in concluding, that it comes in the place of circumcision, under the former dispensation of religion. (See Matt. xxviii. 18—20 ; and Coloss. ii. 10—12.) And, lest any should conclude that the *outward and visible sign* is to be taken for the *inward and spiritual grace*, we are expressly taught that he is not a Jew, or a Christian, who is one *outwardly* ; neither is that circumcision, or baptism, which saves the soul, which is *outward* in the flesh ; but he is a Jew, or a Christian, who is one *inwardly* ; and circumcision, or baptism, is that *of the heart*,—in the spirit, and not in the letter,—“ whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Compare Rom. ii. 28, 29, with 1 Peter iii. 21.) Baptism, then, cannot be, and therefore never ought to be, confounded *with* regeneration ; for, what did our Lord himself say (John iii.) to one who had, beyond all doubt, been initiated into the visible Church ? “ Ye must be born again.” In another place, he plainly points out *faith* as the *principle of regeneration* ; and how *children* can exercise this principle, if you can tell me, I cannot tell you ; and I therefore deeply deplore those representations of the doctrine which are so utterly subversive of the faith, and consequently of the obedience, of the gospel ! (See John v. 24 ; 2 Cor. v. 16, 17 ; Gal. i. 15—17 ; iii. 25—28 ; and Ephes. iv. 22—24.) If, then, there be any truth in these passages ; if the Bible is to be taken as “ the Judge that ends the strife, when wit and reason fail,” it will undeniably follow, that those only who are capable of understanding what the gospel is, and who are partakers of the faith and holiness of the gospel, can realize or enjoy its salvation. But then comes the burial service : all, surely, must be right with the dead, who have this read over them ! It ought, indeed, to be so ; and those who read it ought to be fully persuaded, in their own minds, that the deceased was distinguished for the faith and sanctity of the Christian character, as well as baptized in the Christian church, or rather, as you would call it, *the Church of England* ; otherwise, they solemnly insult the omniscient Judge of all ;—they instil and cherish in the minds of surrounding spectators, the most palpable delusions, as to what is necessary to admission into the king-

dom of heaven;—and thereby, in my view at least, (and I think I have the mind of Christ in its indulgence,) incur a responsibility, which a mind under the influence of the greatest moral insensibility alone can think of without trembling! Oh! but “we may hope well concerning the dead;” assuredly we may, and especially concerning all who are *hopeful*; but the Church of England not only hopes well, but is *perfectly confident*, and *abundantly thankful*, concerning all that are buried by her ministers, and within the limits of her *consecrated ground*! And yet, surely, reason as well as *religion*, would teach us, if we are wise enough to learn their dictates, to leave those who really are not *hopeful*, in the state of uncertainty in which they die. (See Psalm cxv. 17, 18.) As to the notion of “praying for the dead,” it is so preposterous, that I have always wondered how any rational man can adopt it! Reason teaches us to pray for those things only which, we may believe, it will be for God’s honour to grant, as well as our interests to receive. Now, surely, it can never be for his honour to falsify all the information he has given us, every declaration he has made, concerning our present existence and the issues of death. He teaches us, that the present is a probationary period of existence; and as that is a period which necessarily involves a close, it follows, that when our present mode of existence is changed, the time of our probation is terminated, and our destiny is fixed—and fixed for ever! Moses, Job, David, and the prophets, are explicit in their declarations upon his point. Our Lord, in his parables of the “Talents,” the “Rich Man and Lazarus;” in many declarations concerning the present life of man, and the future destinations of his existence; and his Apostles, also, are equally explicit; and, therefore, all prayer for the dead, it being morally impossible to have any influence over either them or us, must be both unwise and useless; not to add, even impious.

But you express yourself *feelingly*, as well as *uncertainly*, upon this point, and therefore I proceed to notice another point upon which you seem more confident; viz., the administration of Baptism, and the Lord’s-supper, as essential to admission into the kingdom of heaven:—and here you have taken ground which is untenable, and any proofs you can adduce must fail you. Scripture is against you. The thief upon the cross, whose salvation our Lord announced, received neither of the sacraments of the Christian Church. History is against you, for it furnishes, at least, presumptive evidence, that the elements of our Lord’s-supper were never administered to the dying, until the Church was corrupted in all her institutions:—and Christian principle is against you, for then, reviving in all its energies, it rises above all earthly means and agencies of improvement, and steadily reclining in the arms of everlasting love and grace, cries out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”

Your information concerning Calvin is perfectly erroneous,—the foulest calumny upon his character I ever heard of before! He died *most peacefully*, full of faith and hope; a Christian, acknowledged by all but Papists. Your acquaintance with the history of your own Church, and especially with her Articles, most evidently needs improvement. Burnett would help you much. Neale’s “History of the Puritans” would help you more. “Predestination to Life” is the doctrine of the Bible; and of the 17th Article of the Church of England also. And as to what is thought of the present state of that Church, I

would refer you to the pamphlets called, "The Church of England in Danger from Herself," by the Rev. J. Acaster.—"A Solemn Appeal on behalf of the Church," by the Rev. D. Nihill.—"A Letter to his Grace the Archbishop of York," by J. M. Beverley Esq., and "Bul-teel's Sermon, preached before the University of Oxford." If you would condescend to read one published by a *Dissenter*, I would refer you to one called, "Dissent and the Church," by the Rev. J. A. James, of Birmingham.

Pray excuse "my great plainness of speech;" I have written only with a view to your benefit.

And believe me your obliged and faithful servant,

T. SCHOFIELD.

To Admiral Stirling.

Lecture the First,

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 16TH, 1836,

BY THE REV. J. H. HINTON, A.M.

AT DEVONSHIRE-SQUARE CHAPEL, BISHOPSGATE.

If I have taken the occasion, afforded by the recent Lectures of Dr. Chalmers, for delivering the present course, it is undoubtedly not through fear of the effect, either of discussion in general, or of this discussion in particular. I am rather glad, that the question of national religious Establishments should be discussed in any and every form; and this for two reasons—partly because I have *not* the spirit of a partisan, but shall rejoice in the progress of truth, whatever be the fate of the company with which I am associated—and partly because I *have* the spirit of a partisan, and entertain a conviction that, of the beneficial fruits of such discussions, we shall have (to use the words of a right reverend prelate on a recent occasion,) “the lion’s share.” We hail the agitation, of this question therefore, in every quarter, and no where more than in those elevated regions, in which it has now for the first time been mooted, and the inhabitants of which have in no very remarkable degree had their senses hitherto exercised in “discerning between good and evil.”

Our opponents having thus spoken, and spoken so loud, it is of course both justifiable and imperative on us to speak also. After the appeal already made to the public ear, no complaint can be sustained against us, if we do what we can to engage still further attention to the subject. Whatever wrong may attach to the aggressive party in this case does not lie at *our* door; we are only making our defence.

Now it is worth while to mark at the outset the new position of the question under review. Time was, when the propriety—the right principle—of national

Establishments of religion was a thing taken for granted, as admitting of no question, or asserted dogmatically, as though every questioner of it was to be borne down by the weight of great names and high authority. But the case *now* assumes a different aspect. The principle of national religious Establishments is not now, it seems, assumed as incontrovertible; nor is the controversy expected to be settled by dogmatical assertion and the weight of names. Here is an appeal—not by the adversaries of religious Establishments now, (they have made it long ago,) but at last, by *the friends* of religious Establishments here is an appeal made *to the popular mind*. For the first time in the history of the world, that I know of, there have been popular Lectures on behalf of the principle of religious Establishments.

There is something very instructive in this. It tells us, that the endeavours we have been making, to awaken the popular mind on this subject, have not been made in vain. There never would have been an appeal to the mind of the people in behalf of the principle of a national religious Establishment, if it were not that there was in the mind of the people gaining ground a pretty strong feeling against it. We have done our work, it seems, in some measure; we have not laboured in vain; and the fact now comes out unquestionably, that the popular mind has been wrought on to such an extent, as to impede the exercise of authority in such matters.

We learn too from this fact, that even authority—church and state authority combined—like Juggernaut’s car upon some occasions, sticks fast, and that they

can venture no further in opposition to the temper of the public mind. They must try to mollify it; they must try to diminish the asperity of the feeling against national religious Establishments, by convincing if they can, and persuading if they cannot convince. The feeling of the nation at large is now allowed to be the standard, to which the appeal must be made. Public opinion is to be even of this question the final umpire.

We say "Hear! Hear!" to this concession. It ought to be so; we have been endeavouring to effect that it should be so; and our adversaries now tell us, that it *shall* be so. We are glad to have dragged our opponents to this field.

The first effort they make in it is certainly a very determined one. It must have required no little resolution—if it did not rather indicate some huge perplexity—to select as an advocate for religious Establishments in England a member of a church, in whose nostrils prelacy (that is to say, the English Establishment) is abhorred, and a divine, whom his admiring patrons, for want of apostolic ordination, could not admit into their pulpits. Nor can it have been without sorrowful misgivings of their wisdom, if without keen smarting for their folly, that they have listened to a defence of religious Establishments, founded on principles they reject, and fortified by the renunciation of almost all they revere. *They* have maintained the immeasurable superiority of episcopacy over every other form of ecclesiastical polity, and the divine right of its territorial establishment; Dr. Chalmers assures them, that it is only one of a half a score sects of such nearly equal value, that any one of them might indifferently have been chosen for the state Establishment. *They* have prided themselves upon the fancied possession of a mysterious power, derived by unbroken succession from the apostles—a plea which their lauded champion coolly advises them to abandon. *They* have spoken vehem-

ently of the sin of schism; and in terms which Dr. Chalmers affirms fail alike of his sympathy and his comprehension. And these are the things, which the friends of the Church of England have caused to be uttered, and which reverends and right reverends and nobles and princes have heard, in the high places of her metropolis!

But Dr. Chalmers holds the *principle* of an Establishment, we are told, and this he has come to defend. It is well. The principle of Establishments has been attacked; and here is an acknowledgment that it is in no little peril, since it needs a defence. Clearly this matter requires energy. It is of great importance to *them*; for the fate of Establishments is suspended on the decision, since no idea can be entertained, that, when the public shall be generally convinced of the impropriety of religious Establishments, they will long stand. It is of no less importance to *us*; for there is at stake in it the cause of "pure and undefiled religion," on which Establishments are powerfully acting for good or for ill—and, as we think, *for ill*. There is no greater obstacle, in our opinion, to the spread of real religion; than the existence of these Establishments; there could be no greater facility afforded to the increase of real religion, than the removal of this obstruction. We, therefore, without its being at all imagined that we contend for the emoluments or the honours, have to say that we strive, as we think, for God—for truth—for the welfare of mankind. We do not say, that they are too earnest; nor ought we to be less earnest than they.

We shall endeavour not to forget, however, that the question of national religious Establishments, is a question of a sacred character. Not that all who take sides on it are pious; manifestly not; partisans on either side of this question are not all of them men of God; but some are so; the piety of some is undoubted. To us it is not a question of state-craft, cupidity, or ambition, but a question between Christian brethren. We

own them so, from whom we differ. We shall neither repeat nor retaliate the harsh and unwarrantable epithets of our Scottish antagonist, but shall endeavour to speak in the spirit of love, which we declare towards "all those who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

As it is Dr. Chalmers's avowed design to vindicate the principle of Establishments, and as it is to be supposed that he has put the subject in the newest and most approved light, it will be proper, though without confining ourselves to his line of argument, (which in truth is very partial,) to pay some attention to his mode of treating the question.

He very singularly begins, by removing an objection which has no manner of relation to his theme. He tells us of "certain religionists," who so hold the doctrine of the Spirit's influence, as to supersede the use of means. It is strange if he does not know, that the religionists by whom this preposterous notion is held, constitute a mere fraction of the Dissenting body, and are as numerous probably in the church as out of it. But if it were held by us all, what then? It is an argument against exertion in general, but it is none against an Establishment in particular, nor has it ever been used as such, except in the visions of this imaginative divine. We are obliged to him for tearing the flimsy sophism to pieces—which we had done often before him; but he proves nothing by all this in favour of Establishments, unless he can show (which he cannot show,) that they are the only mode of exertion for the support of religion.

He then gives us his definition—a very important thing in this as in all controversies, and concerning which he shows a remarkable wariness. His words are these, (in the ninth page of his "Lectures")—"We should assume, then, as the basis of our definition for a religious Establishment, or as the essential property by which to specify and characterise it—a sure legal provision for the expence

of its ministrations." And a little lower down—"It is this, which forms the essence of an Establishment, and as such must be singled out from among all the other accessories, wherewith it may happen to be variegated."

A sure legal provision for the expence of its ministrations! There is surely a great defect in this definition. A legal provision is *not* the whole of a national Establishment. There is at least one other element, vital and essential; there must be not only national revenue, but national authority in a national religious Establishment.

Now of this national authority, (which seems to have haunted Dr. Chalmers like a phantom, and which he evidently designs and strives hard to escape, and to steer clear of, as a rock on which he would have dreaded shipwreck,) we must maintain that it does belong essentially to the idea of a national religious Establishment—a claim for the authority of the state to be exercised in the religious affairs of the nation, constituting what Dr. Chalmers scornfully denounces, as a "lordship over the creed and the conscience."

Now in proof that, in the idea of a national religious Establishment, there is fairly and essentially included this element—namely, national authority exercised with reference to the religion of the nation—we adduce, first, the evident theory of all such institutions. For a sovereign or legislature to institute a national Establishment of a certain religion is not merely to pay some persons to teach it, but to require other persons to be taught—to require them to submit to the profession of it—to ordain that the nation shall be of that religion. Suppose, for example, that a Mahometan sovereign, having obtained the throne of a country, constitutes a national Establishment of the Mahometan religion, is that any thing short of ordaining that the Mahometan religion shall be the religion of the country? This is the theory of Establishments taken up and developed by Hooker, a celebrated writer

whom I need no more than name, in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," who lays it down that, in a national Establishment of religion, every person in the nation is a member of the national church, by virtue of his being a member of the nation itself—that the nation is the church, and the church is the nation. And according to the theory of the English national church, we are as much members of the national church, though Dissenters, as the church people themselves; practically there is an anomaly, but the principle, the theory is this; and it is by virtue of the theory that we are still belonging to the national church, that we are caught hold of to pay church rates, and so forth. The power that creates such an institution must govern it. Say that a sovereign gives to his people the right of choosing their own ministers, it is his authority that gives them the right, and they hold that religious privilege under his authority. Say that he gives to the ministers the power to choose their own creed, still it is his authority that permits them to choose. There is no framing the theory of a national Establishment, as far as I can see, excluding the idea of authority in religious matters out of it.

Then, in the second place, in proof of the same point, we cite obvious facts. Look at all such Establishments, that are in existence. Take the Church of England. That is a national religious Establishment, and the authority of the legislature and the sovereign are not things unheard of in it. The head of the Church of England is the Sovereign—at the present time the Queen, who is declared, in legal phrase well known, to be "in all matters and causes ecclesiastical supreme." Not a Bishop can be chosen, till she sends her permission to the Chapter to choose one; nor can a Bishop be chosen, other than the reverend divine she is pleased to nominate. The articles of the Church of England and the book of common prayer were not brought into use, nor made of any authority at all, till they passed through the legislature;

they are "established" by Act of Parliament. And so throughout the whole concern. And in this respect the Church of England is no exception to the general rule. Look at the Church of Ireland, the Church in Holland, in France, or wherever else you will; wherever there is a national Establishment of religion, there is palpably, in immense masses and to minute details, the exercise of authority in matters of religion. Dr. Chalmers, indeed, in a very extraordinary passage, claims the Church of Scotland as an exception to this rule; and if we wanted to show the good man's incapacity, both for argument, and for the statement of facts which must be quite palpable to himself, this passage would be sufficient to do it. He gives us, in the opening of his second Lecture, a long story about a divine of Maryland, who had taken fire at the notion of church and state; and the Doctor very coaxingly says, 'Would not you like an endowment yourself?' 'Oh! yes.' 'And would not you like to have the whole state of Maryland covered with endowed churches of your denomination?' 'Oh! yes, delighted'—says the man. 'Well, this is all I mean by a national religious Establishment.' We shall talk more about that by and by: but this man "failed" (says he,) "in making the requisite distinction, between the act of a government in giving food and raiment to ministers, and the act of a government in assuming a lordship over the creed and the consciences of ministers." And then he gives a passage from one of his old sermons, (for so it is quoted, "vol. ii., sermon 15, uniform edition") in which he proclaims most marvellously the independence of the Church of Scotland. "There is to each of its members" (says he,) "a free and independent voice from within, and from without there is no power or authority whatever in matters ecclesiastical;" and then he quotes a celebrated saying of my Lord Chatham, concerning the glory of every man's house that lives in England, that it is "his castle;" and adds—"Not that it is surrounded with walls and bat-

lements; it may be a straw-built shed, every wind of heaven may whistle round it, every element of heaven may enter it; but the king cannot, the king dare not." A pretty notion! when not a meeting of the General Assembly of Scotland can be held, without the royal commissioner presiding over it. "And from without" (he says,) "there is no power or authority whatever in matters ecclesiastical." That is well said. Why, the state and distribution of church patronage in Scotland is so outrageously corrupt and mischievous, that the General Assembly have passed an act to render it somewhat more decorous and conducive to the general good of the parishes; the patrons of the livings, aggrieved by this, have gone to the civil court in Scotland, and the civil court has decided that the General Assembly has no power to make such an act at all, even to regulate the distribution of their own patronage; and of the thirteen judges, eight of them have pronounced an opinion, that the Church of Scotland is nothing but the creature of the state, and that the sovereign is as truly the head of that church, as the sovereign is also the head of the Church of England. I can only suppose, that Dr. Chalmers wrote and printed this sermon, before this case in the parish of Auchterarder (for that is the place,) had occurred; but then, after it had occurred, it was hardly honest of him—at least it was rather forgetful—to re-print it.

But in further proof of this, (that there is an exercise of authority involved in national Establishments of religion,) I refer to the fact, that state authority in religious matters is now asserted and clung to by the advocates generally of religious Establishments. The exceptions are few—very few. There are a few church people, who do wish that there were no authority of the state exercised in religious matters; but the reasons of most of these are very obvious—they find that it thwarts them in some or other of their designs. Thus we have your conservative church people, who are very angry indeed and very

grieved that there should be any manner of state authority exercised in the church, while there is a liberal ministry in office, but who would hug their chains again, if the Tories should come into power; and you have others, very noble and evangelical men, who want to do all the good they can, and they are thwarted in their endeavours, and so they come to feel that state authority in the church is not a very good thing. But generally the advocates of religious Establishments even yet contend for and cling to the exercise of state authority in matters of religion. Pamphlets are even now written, enforcing the subjection of the subjects of the realm to the established religion, upon the ground of the duty of civil obedience, or obedience to civil rulers. I believe Dr. Brown in Scotland has recently, in the "Voluntary" controversy there, written a pamphlet on that principle, enforcing the duty of subjection to the religious Establishment, by the duty of obedience to civil rulers. On the same ground we all know it is, that Dissenters have so often been charged in a mass with disloyalty. We have had the broad principle laid down, that, if a man be a Dissenter, he cannot be a good subject—that, if he be an alien from the church, he must be a traitor to the state—that church and state are one, and, if you do not love the church, you do not love the king. That has been thrown in our teeth many a time. And this is the very feeling of the advocates of church Establishments at this time. They are not, as a body, becoming sick of this argument or wishing to renounce it; but they cling to it, and are fighting for it.

State authority in matters of religion, therefore, is an element of national churches.

Now Dr. Chalmers's definition of national religious Establishments, not including this element, is altogether defective, and his argument is utterly void. It matters not what he has said; he cannot have said a single word to the purpose, through the entire failure of his definition of a national religious Establishment.

Dr. Chalmers has not omitted this element inadvertently or unintentionally; the shrewd Scotchman knew well what he was about. "The thing we deprecate" (he represents his American as saying,) "is the authority of the civil magistrate in matters of religion, but we should be thankful to him or to any one else, for giving us (what he termed) an organised provision for a clergy. Now," says Dr. Chalmers, "this organised provision is truly all that we contend for." So that, with his eyes open, he is keeping clear of this question of state authority in matters of religion.

It is not, then, a national religious Establishment, that the Doctor pleads for. He is not an advocate for it, but wants a thing of his own sort—a Utopian affair, utterly unlike any thing that ever did exist in the world, or that ever can exist; for never will there be, or can there be, an immense body of lucratively paid clergymen, that shall be exempt from the authority of the state that pays them.

It is not a national religious Establishment that he pleads for. Yet he professes to vindicate national religious Establishments. How strangely must his claim of independency have sounded in the ears of such an audience! Yet they applauded him. Were they then infatuated by his eloquence? Or are the senses of noblemen and princes so little exercised in the judgment between good and evil, that they really did not see the nature of his statement? Or is there growing up in high quarters a wish for the separation of church and state? And are bishops, and nobles, and royal princes, and uncles of the sovereign, forming a conspiracy to pluck from the British crown the jewel of ecclesiastical supremacy?

Let it be well understood, that in this principle we agree with Dr. Chalmers. Independent the Church of Scotland and every church ought to be. This is *our* principle; but in holding it, the Doctor abandons the entire cause of national religious Establishments.

In this path, however, other advocates

of the system will not follow him. We shall still hear of the claim, though *he* has renounced it. And it will be as well for us to grapple with those who occupy this ground, before we proceed further in considering the question of expediency, as argued by the Doctor.

For this purpose we may take the language of the present Chancellor of the diocese of Winchester—the reverend (and, for ought I know, by virtue of his office, the venerable) Dr. Dealtry; and I take it in the form of a tract, circulated by the Society for promoting Christian knowledge, entitled "Religious Establishments tried by the word of God," being Tract, No. 497. I take it in this form, because I suppose, as it circulates among the people at large, the argument is put in as correct and compact a form as possible. At page 9 are these words:

"The legislature of every country is assuredly bound to consult in all things the public welfare. It may doubtless fail in the proper discharge of its functions, but the obligation itself is one which, as a government, it is not at liberty to cast off. Is religion of importance to society? No Christian will assert the contrary. For what reason then is the line to be drawn so broadly between matters of a purely civil and those of a religious nature, that on the one side of the line the authorities of the state are to expatiate in perfect liberty, but are on no account to do good by passing over to the other?—to be allowed the privilege of enacting wholesome laws for the regulation of secular concerns, but to be prohibited from taking any measure for diffusing that sacred knowledge, and extending those heavenly principles, which, even as it respects the laws themselves can alone secure order and obedience."

Here is the pith of this argument, as put by Dr. Dealtry. In short, it is this—The legislature of every country is bound to consult in all things the public welfare; religion is for the public welfare of a country; and therefore the legislature of every country is bound to take care of religion.

There is candour in putting the proposition thus generally—in speaking of the legislature "of every country" as bound to do this. Sometimes we hear of the obligation of *pious* princes and statesmen. The question, however, relates to the obligation

of princes and legislators as such, inasmuch as it is out of their position as rulers that the alleged right and duty arise; they must pertain to all rulers or to none. So that the only fair form, in which the question can be put, is this—whether the right and obligation of attending to the religion of a nation belongs to rulers as such, and to all rulers. So Dr. Dealtry has had the candour to put it; “The legislature of every country is assuredly bound to consult in all things the public welfare.” This first sentence contains an important phrase—“*in all things*,” “the legislature of every country is assuredly bound to consult in *all things* the public welfare.” This we deny. We limit this phrase; “the legislature of every country is bound to consult the public welfare in all things” *civil*, but in no other things. It could not be supposed, that we should admit, in the first place, that “the legislature of every country is bound to consult the public welfare in all things,” and then think that afterwards we could make an exception of religion. It is here we make our exception, where Dr. Dealtry seems little to have anticipated it. “The legislature of every country is bound to consult the public welfare” in all matters *civil*, but not in matters religious.

“Now,” says Dr. Dealtry, “for what reason is this line drawn so broadly between matters *civil* and matters religious?” We will tell him.

First, because religious matters are wholly beyond the just scope and design of human governments. There were indeed times when it was maintained, as an incontrovertible proposition, that kings had “a divine right” to reign; and when it was admitted that kings had their right to reign direct from God, it might be pretended perhaps that that right divine extended to religious, as well as to other matters. But I do not know, that there are any politicians, who hold the *jus divinum*,

“The right divine of kings to govern wrong,” in this day. Now the theory of govern-

ment, apart from the exploded notion of the divine right of kings, excludes religious matters. Government is a system of restriction on our natural rights; that is to say, under a government our natural rights are limited. Our right to the soil, our right to food and various other rights, as natural rights, are all equal; but rights of property are limitations upon the rights of nature, and government is altogether a system of restriction upon our natural rights, to which every man submits, and surrenders a portion of his own natural rights, for the purpose of securing the rest. The government is conceived of as saying, You all agree to surrender each a portion of your natural rights, and to bow your necks to a general but useful restriction; and the state or the government will feel itself bound to secure you all in the possession of the remainder of your rights, that portion which you do not resign. Government is thus a system of restriction upon our natural rights, every individual giving up a part for the sake of securing the rest. But it is only our *civil* rights, a portion of which we thus surrender. None of us mean to surrender any portion of our moral or our religious rights, into the hands of any person whatsoever. None of us are willing to make any such sacrifice. We might not, if we would; we could not, if we would. God does not permit it; our highest interest would not permit it; our obligation to God would not permit it; nor could it be carried out, even if we were to try it. Nor has the state any thing to give us, in return for such a sacrifice, if we were to make it. The government, therefore, in this respect receiving no trust, is under no obligation to exercise care. According to the theory of government, its whole care is to be confined to the civil welfare of the community.

We draw this broad line of distinction between civil and religious matters—secondly, because religious matters are practically beyond the reach of human

governments. Religion is essentially a matter of opinion—opinions issuing in conduct—but not of conduct apart from opinions. Religion is essentially a decision of the judgment; and as such, it cannot be reached by the machinery of human governments. They do not attempt to reach any other matter of opinion; no government passes a law, that all philosophers shall be Baconians, or that all logicians shall be Aristotelians; it would be preposterous manifestly that they should. And it is quite as preposterous, to pass any law that all the subjects of a nation shall be either Moslems, or Christians, or Budhists. The matter cannot be reached; and the actual effect of all such enactments is, not the production of opinion, but the production of conformity. They touch the outward conduct; they say, ‘You must go to church,’ and they may contrive to make you go; but when they say, ‘You must entertain such and such views of God and Christ and eternity,’ they can make no hand at it at all; they cannot touch it.

We draw this broad line between things civil and things religious, thirdly, because the processes of human legislation are in religious matters utterly inapplicable and mischievous. Laws are worth nothing, which have no sanction. There are accordingly rewards and punishments attached to all human laws. But what can be made of the attaching of human rewards and penalties, or human sanctions, to religious virtue or infidelity? Propose a bishopric to a man for becoming a Christian; or enact a dungeon for a man for being an atheist. Abhorred appeal to the understanding and conscience of a man! Abhorred appeal! bringing into operation the worst motives, and tending to make of a nation nothing but a nation of hypocrites. And there are no sanctions at the disposal of human governments, that are any way applicable to the case, or that can work otherwise than with utter mischief.

We draw this line between things civil

and religious, fourthly, because in religious matters the authority of God is paramount and exclusive. To no other being are we responsible for our conduct in religious matters; to no other are we bound to listen. For human authority to interfere, therefore, is to supersede his authority—which man ought not to do, and which God will not permit. We owe no man any reason why we entertain our religious views, or make our religious determinations; we are bound to render no man an account, nor to attach authority to the voice of any man in that which he teaches. We are entitled to ask, “What saith the Lord?”—and to maintain our incredulity and hold ourselves aloof, till we hear it answered, “Thus saith the Lord.” No man has any business to demand of me of what religion I am; and if by any means he can guess and find out of what religion I am, he has no business either to reward or to punish me for it. There is no just dominion over conscience, but God’s dominion; every thing that assumes it in any measure, is essentially and of necessity a tyranny.

We draw this line of distinction between matters civil and religious, fifthly, because our decision in religious matters involves a responsibility, which the state cannot assume. If the government dictates my religion, it ought to secure me against the consequences of a wrong choice. I have a soul to be saved; and if the government tell me, We have established a clergyman, and we have required you to be of a certain religion, I ask in reply, Will you or the clergyman be responsible for the safety of my soul? and if I am to go to hell at last, will you go in my stead? If you will not, then I say, hold your tongue; let me take care of my own soul, and, if I perish, be responsible for my own condition—as I must be. You will recollect, perhaps, that on certain occasions the church has put out this very notion. In order to make people quiet in their parishes the clergy have been found saying, ‘Why should you be careful about

your soul? keep to your church, and trust to us; we will take care of your soul.' This has been said in as many words. Now this pretension is a most awful and horrible pretension; but it is involved of necessity in the constitution of a national religious Establishment. And seeing that such responsibility cannot in point of fact be assumed—that no state, and no clergyman, and no set of clergymen, can be responsible, or secure me against the consequences of a wrong choice in religion—they ought not to attempt to dictate to me what kind of religion I should adopt or reject.

And we draw this distinction between civil and religious matters, sixthly, because if authority in religious matters be allowed to governments, it sanctions the establishment of all false religions. Governors, if they ought to act at all, ought to act honestly. It is of no use to say, that a government ought to establish *Christianity*. Ought a government to establish Christianity, which believes that Mahomedanism is the true religion? Such a government, I should suppose, ought to establish, if any religion, the Mahomedan religion. Then see what we should have, if such was to be the case over the whole earth. Here be "lords many and gods many," and they are all of them taking this province of deciding on the religion of their subjects; the Sultan commands his people to be Mahometans, and the Emperor of China commands his to be of the religion of Confucius, and of the rulers in every place each is commanding his subjects to be of this and that religion, establishing a thousand false religions, while there may be a governor or two that establish the true. And this is sanctioned by the principle, that governors have a right and a duty to care for the religion of their subjects. You are not entitled to say to them, 'All you governors and rulers, that are establishing false religions, are doing wrong;' they are all fulfilling their duty, carrying out the principle laid down by the Chancellor of the diocese of

Winchester as the principle of national religious Establishments.

Such are our reasons for drawing the line broadly between civil and religious matters.

What are Dr. Dealtry's reasons for obliterating it? Why would he say there should be no such line? These are his reasons.

First, the necessity of oaths in civil proceedings. This is a strange notion;—but it really is the main pin of his argument, and therefore it is necessary to take some notice of it.

"It is difficult to imagine," says Dr. Dealtry, "that those who exclude the magistrate from all concern between man and his Maker, and require him to abstain entirely from interference in religion, can have well considered the length to which that principle will carry them. Without something for instance, in the nature of an oath—some appeal to Almighty God, as to One who knows the truth, and will punish falsehood—no man could have the security of a moment, either for property or for life, and the frame-work of society would be dissolved. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, with a view to the welfare of a nation, that the sanctity of an oath should be respected; and hence that all classes of subjects, from the highest to the lowest, should have a just sense of their accountableness to God."

And therefore there should be an Establishment of religion, with about four millions a-year and near 20,000 clergymen, to teach people the sanctity of an oath! An expensive apparatus for the quantity of security for truth that oaths give us. Does Dr. Dealtry then think, that oaths are a security for truth? There are some gentlemen of the law, who could tell him a very contrary tale. Is he prepared to say, that there is no truth in civil transactions, but where are oaths? Or does he believe, that all who swear oaths have a just sense of their accountableness to God therein? Or does he think, that this sense of accountableness to God is practically instilled into the population by a national Establishment of religion? Or what would be done by a Pagan Establishment?—because it is not only an Establishment of Christianity that we talk of, but his argument must apply to an

Establishment of idolatry ; and would he insist upon having an Establishment of idolatry, that people might learn the sanctity of oaths, for the security of civil property ?

His second argument is this—The duty of parents in relation to their children. He thus writes—

“It was doubtless, from the beginning the duty of every master of a family to bring up his children and to train his household in the fear of the Lord.” And from this he goes on to argue that a nation is but a large family, and that what is the duty of a parent in a family is equally the duty of a king upon his throne.

But admitting this—that it is the duty of all parents to bring and train up their family in the fear of the Lord, there is no exercise of authority in religious matters in this. This is a mere matter of instruction. The question is whether parents have a right to *dictate* the religion of their children, as the state claims to dictate the religion of its subjects. We say, No; parents have only to put their children into the best position for judging for themselves, and then to persuade them to what they believe to be the truth. To talk of *Christian* parents, and say it is their duty to dictate to their children, seems very pleasant, because they would dictate the true religion ; but we are speaking of the right of parents universally, and if we allow Pagan parents the right to dictate to their children, what then? We know, on the very contrary, that our Missionaries go forth complaining of such a dictation, and calling for a free exercise of the judgment of the children. And besides, all attempts at authority in religious matters, on the part of parents, would be just as futile as unrighteous—and open to the same objections as have been already alleged.

Dr. Dealtry's third argument is the Jewish national Establishment.

“Here,” says he, speaking of the Jewish national Establishment, “was a religious Establishment most intimately connected, and even incorporated with the state; and unless it can be shown that the adoption of such a system under the new dispensation contradicts some positive command, or is op-

posed to some moral principle, the question has been here settled by Jehovah himself.”

Now this is a very instructive reference, and shows what kind of Institution the friends of Establishments hanker after, and how much authority they would like. This Jewish Establishment exercised a cruel and tremendous authority, and it is an Establishment like that, it seems, after all, if they could get it, that our churchmen would be fond of. But even if this were a *church* Establishment, we say, it was God's own doing. Dr. Dealtry asks triumphantly, “Did the Almighty forbid the civil authorities to interfere with his church?” To be sure he did; he smote Uzzah for putting his finger upon the ark, and he limited the civil authority in all cases by his own express directions. For the interference of civil authorities in religious matters, the Jewish economy presents no manner of pretence. God did it all. God does nothing of the kind now ; if he did, we would not utter a word or cherish a feeling of resistance; but there is no alternative in religious matters between a theocracy and a tyranny, if there be authority exercised at all. We deny, however, that the Jewish Establishment was a *religious* Establishment in any sense. It was a typical Establishment, and therefore necessarily a secular one. You cannot possibly make spiritual things to be the types of spiritual things; nothing but carnal things can become types of spiritual things; and as every body admits that the Jewish system was a system of types, so of necessity it was a system of temporal things, a system of shadows and not of substance. This whole subject has been treated admirably and conclusively by a Scotchman of great name, one of the Erskines, in his “Three Dissertations;” one of them is on the character of the Jewish economy, and he shows that it was a secular and not a spiritual system. There were no schools—there were no places of worship, except the one at Jerusalem, if worship it was—there were no institutions of instruc-

tion—there was no use of the Sabbath day for teaching the people or for edification—no synagogues throughout the land, until just before the time of Jesus Christ, and not of God's appointment nor Mosaic institution—and there were no religious results either from obedience or disobedience to the Jewish law. All that there was of religion was to be found in the exercise of the individual's mind upon the typical character and spiritual import of the Jewish ordinances, and the oracles of truth in their possession. The Jewish Establishment, therefore, was (as we affirm) not a religious Establishment at all. It affords no example of one. The whole argument, founded upon this, fails. And more than that; the whole subject of national religious Establishments is thus left to be treated anew by Christ and his apostles; and hence there is no force in Dr. Dealtry's chief argument, that reference to it by them was unnecessary. For when we ask, What have Christ and his apostles said about religious Establishments? what we are told in answer is this, "Why should they dwell upon the duties of Christian rulers, when there were no Christian rulers in existence, and especially when the obligations of pious princes were so clearly to be seen in the Old Testament? there was no need for our Lord to refer to it; it was so manifest in the Jewish Establishment." But if that were not a religious Establishment, then it *was* necessary, that, if our Lord or his apostles had any thing to say about such Institutions, they should have said it (which Dr. Dealtry admits they did not do,) and not have passed it over in silence.

And, in the last place, he says, that the general Christian obligation of doing all they can for Christ and for his cause requires pious princes to establish Christianity. But now the question is not about *pious* princes; the question is whether princes *universally* have a right and duty to interfere with the religion of their subjects. This last argument can

apply only to *pious* rulers; it is, therefore, quite beside the mark, the question we have being one relating to all rulers, and not merely to pious ones. And besides this, even with pious rulers, (to whom this remark may be applicable, that they should do all they can for Christ,) their obligation must stop short at the limit between power and persuasion. Men may be obliged to do all they can for Christ, but they must not do wrong for Christ; they must not transgress the proper limit and boundary of duty under the alleged force of the greatness of their obligation; the weapons, that are "carnal," must not be taken up. There must be a limit observed, even by pious princes; they may persuade, but they ought not to dictate; they may set examples and use Christian influence, but they are not to become "lords over God's heritage," nor to enact laws about religion, however wholesome.

Now this is the whole of Dr. Dealtry's argument in support of his position, that a legislature is entitled and required to look to the religious welfare of the community.

Thus we endeavour to make out the general principle, that human governments ought *not* to meddle with religious affairs. If we do make this out, we apply this general principle to the particular case of Christianity, and say that human governments ought not to enact laws in relation to Christianity; be they *Christian* princes and *Christian* legislators, or what else, it is no part of their duty to enact laws concerning the religion of their subjects, not even concerning Christianity. National Establishments of religion, therefore, being founded upon laws concerning religion, are utterly wrong.

This conclusion seems painful to our brethren, (that Christian governments may not establish Christianity,) — not merely as it might be painful to a Turk, to argue and bring him to such a conclusion in Turkey, because it happens to be the established religion and the source (it

may be,) of emolument to himself—but inasmuch as they are many of them deeply concerned for the best interests of their fellow-men. I do not hesitate to say, that it is painful to pious Churchmen, on the ground that they think it is a great benefit to the country; an Establishment, (they tell us,) might do so much good. Well, we are not unconcerned about the good of the country; but after all, this is not the first consideration. If it is wrong, it may not be. We are not called upon to argue the expediency. Whatever is *right* should be done; and if there be less good done

without an Establishment than might have been done with one, the blame of that will not rest upon us, but upon that great, and holy and gracious God, who can well bear the blame, and in subordination to whose will we have refused to enact laws relating to religion.

We are willing, however, to meet the combat upon the lower ground of expediency. We will proceed to do so in the following Lectures; and as we have seen that our shrewd Scotchman has taken care to avoid Scylla, we will then see whether he steers equally clear of Charybdis.

Lecture the Second,

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 30TH, 1836,

BY THE REV. J. H. HINTON, A.M.

AT DEVONSHIRE-SQUARE CHAPEL, BISHOPSGATE.

THE advocates of national religious Establishments dwell largely on their *expediency*. They insist upon it that a host of endowed teachers, with territorial allotments of the population, constitute the best and easiest, nay, the only possible way of diffusing Christianity through a nation. Hence they maintain religious Establishments to be, not only useful and important, but indispensable. They identify their "machinery" with the effective support, if not with the continued existence, of the Christian religion in the land; and under the influence of this assumption, they suffer their imagination to generate frightful apprehensions of the designs of those who take different views, and of the ruinous consequences of our success. "We are," to use the courteous language of our northern brother, "machine-breakers; far more mischievous, but hardly more intelligent, than the machine-breakers of Kent, the frame-breakers of Leicestershire, or the incendiaries of the northern and midland counties of England," (p. 23.)

It is useless, in controversy, to affirm what will not be believed. I shall not take the trouble, therefore, of saying, that, whatever may be the views of some agitators of this question, *we* are as warmly concerned for the support of Christianity as our opponents; and that what we want is, not to obstruct, but to forward her triumphs. The question, however, is not one of persons, but of things. And our discussion of it is not to be set aside by imputations, however grievous, which, if not groundless to the satisfaction of others, are so at least to our own.

It would be easy for us to reply to such
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imputations, by asserting that those who plead for religious Establishments care for the fleece rather than the flock; that the thing which is expedient in their view (and indeed indispensable) is the multiplying of places of emolument and power, which may be obtained without merit, and held without labour. But this would not be to the purpose. That there are many such persons among the advocates of Establishments, no one will deny; but to us, in this argument, they are as though they were not. We admit with joyfulness, that there are on the same side men of devoted piety and zeal for God; and we reason *with them*.

To proceed then with our discussion. The advocates of religious Establishments affirm that they are expedient. We will presently examine this plea. But, before we do this, let the position of it be properly noted. As an argument for Establishments, it holds only a secondary rank. National religious Establishments involve a question of *principle*, as well as a question of *expediency*. We have to ask, not only are they useful, but are they right. And in all controversies, the argument from principle is far more weighty than that from expediency. Nor is it not only the more weighty of the two; it requires to be in all cases decisive of the question at issue. To argue from expediency for doing what is shewn to be wrong, is to say, "Let us do evil that good may come;" a maxim utterly repudiated from all sound systems of morals. Even if the argument from expediency on behalf of national churches could be sustained, therefore, they would not be vindicated, unless they could also be proved *to be right*.

Now in this view we took up religious Establishments in our former Lecture; and we endeavoured to shew that, in point of principle, they are not right, but *wrong*. Involving, as they necessarily do, an attempt at "lordship over creeds and consciences," they aim at objects for which human governments never were designed, to which they never can practically extend, and for which they possess no appropriate or admissible sanctions; they claim to dictate, where they cannot meet the consequences of error; they supersede the paramount, exclusive, and only rightful authority of the Most High; and they give their authority to the multifarious forms of false religion, as well as, by an occasional accident, to the true. National religious Establishments, therefore, are at once a transgression of all just rules of government, and a violation of the most sacred rights, both of the creature and the Creator: they are institutions, consequently, which ought never to have been created, and which ought no longer to exist. To tell us they are useful, is nothing to the purpose. If they are useful, they are equally to be denounced, *because they are wrong*. Nor does it move us to speak, in terms of whatever pathos, of the good which will be lost, or the mischiefs which will ensue, if these institutions should disappear. Should the lamentable picture be true, we are not accountable for it. The mischief does not lie at our door, but at our Maker's. It is *He* who is responsible for the results of *doing right*, because he has made it imperative on us; and doubtless he will be far better pleased with those who, leaving results in his hands, render him the honour of an implicit obedience, than with those who, with an obtrusive care over what does not pertain to them, at once violate his commandments, and infringe upon his prerogative.

The question of principle, in regard to religious Establishments, being decided in the negative, we are not called upon to argue the question of expediency at all. We have a right to dismiss it un-

heard. But we will not insist upon our right. We will hear, and hear patiently, what can be said on this subject. We believe that we have the best of the argument, even on this secondary and inferior ground.

Religious Establishments, we are told, are expedient. Now there is a *general* principle, upon which we are warranted to settle the expediency of things. It may be laid down as a maxim, admitting of no controversy, that *whatever is right is expedient*. The foundations of this sentiment are laid deep in the divine administration. It was for God to link duty and happiness together, rectitude and usefulness; and he would have failed in one of the most essential elements of a moral system, if he had not effectually done so. As a general principle, no one questions it. It is a postulate in moral science. Now this principle must be applicable to religious Establishments, as well as to all other modes of human action; and its application is fatal to them. They claim to be expedient; but we are sure they are not expedient, because they are not right. The things that are really expedient, are the things that are right, and only those. Until it can be shown that religious Establishments are right, therefore, it cannot be truly affirmed that they are expedient; their alleged expediency is rather to be taken as an illusion—a semblance, derived from imposing appearances, aided by erroneous judgments and fallacious anticipations.

For the further consideration of the expediency of national churches, however, we are willing to come down from the high ground of general principle, and to argue the question on the particular facts of the case.

Religious Establishments are expedient—this is the assertion.—Of course, we understand this of religious Establishments *universally*. It means, that it is expedient for all governors, in every land and in every age, to institute religious Establishments; and this, because such Establishments have

great power to diffuse the religious systems so established through the countries respectively, and to maintain their predominance there—the effect of this being that idolatry, fanaticism, and superstition have been propagated throughout almost the whole world, and that these enemies to God and man have entrenched themselves in the said religious Establishments, as in fortresses all but impregnable! Why, this is one of the most painful and deplorable aspects of the world, and presents some of the most afflicting obstacles to the diffusion of the Gospel. Far better would it have been if rulers would have let the religion of their subjects alone, and have left them unshackled by ecclesiastical fetters, until they should be called into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. And yet with all this, as the direct result of the institution of national religious Establishments, there are good people who maintain *their expediency*.

We shall be told, that this is stating the question too broadly; and that our brethren do not mean to contend for the expediency of *all* religious Establishments, but of an Establishment of *Christianity* only. I must maintain, however, that by thus broadly stating it, I have only done justice to the argument. *The question* before us, is that of the expediency of religious Establishments in general; and not of the Establishment of any system of religion in particular. It is as the right and duty of “the legislature of *every* country,” that the creation of such Establishments is brought forward by Dr. Dealtry; and of course, the expediency must be co-extensive with the obligation. If our brethren wish us to give them credit for any soundness of argument, they will never attempt to tell us, that what is obligatory in a hundred cases, can be expedient only in one. Were the rulers of the earth to be imagined as learning their duty from the Chancellor of the diocese of Winchester, we can readily conceive of them as assenting to his declaration of their universal right and obligation to institute re-

ligious Establishments; but with what amazement would they learn, that he confined the *expediency* of such an Establishment to the solitary case of Christianity!

Nor would they be long in finding him an answer. “You confine the expediency of an Establishment to Christianity,” they would tell him, “because that is *your* religion, and you think it true. These are *our* religions, mine, and mine, and mine; we think them true, and denounce yours as baseless, infatuated, and barbarian.” Every sovereign for himself, therefore, finds the same reason for establishing his religion, as Dr. Dealtry and Dr. Chalmers do for establishing theirs. So that the question of religious Establishments universally—the Establishment of Mohammedism, and of Paganism in every form—can not be separated from that of the Establishment of Christianity. You cannot affirm the expediency of one, without affirming the expediency of all; and to affirm the expediency of all is impossible.

But we will let our brethren escape from this dilemma also; and permit them, for the sake of argument, to put the case in their own way. The Establishment of Christianity is expedient. This they are quite sure of. Such are the excellence and importance of this system of religion, that its diffusion must be infinitely beneficial; and so abundant and influential are the means of diffusing it which are at the disposal of government, that they ought without scruple to be employed. Indeed, the multitude, the poverty, and the apathy of the people are so great, that by no other “machinery” can they be “overtaken.” Such are the allegations on behalf of religious Establishments; in one word, they can evangelise a country—and *they alone*.

In treating the case thus put forth on behalf of an Establishment of Christianity, we shall reserve for future consideration, the question whether such an institution be the *only* effectual means of diffusing the light and power of the Gospel; and confine ourselves to enquiring, at present, whether an Establishment *can do it at all*.

This is easily assumed; but some little difficulty may be found connected with the proof.

I might say, indeed, that, if a national Establishment of Christianity were able to carry its vital power through the whole land, it would do so at no inconsiderable cost. I do not now mean the pecuniary cost. There are social mischiefs, inseparable from the working of an Establishment, which make a very perceptible deduction, even from the greatest benefits which may be supposed to be conferred by it. To some of these I shall have occasion to refer hereafter. I mention the subject now, only to have it remembered, that, if a national church should be found to do good, it is not good unalloyed. But we will not now press this consideration. We will admit, that, in the obtaining of so great an end as the effective diffusion of the Gospel, we ought unfeignedly to rejoice; and that, if it be only by self-denials and sacrifices it can be attained, we ought, without murmuring, to submit to them.

But *can* an Establishment of Christianity evangelise the country, and so realise the benefit in the anticipation of which we are told to rejoice? In order to reply to this, we ask two other questions. First, how is a pure Establishment to be secured? And, secondly, what are the elements of its power?

I. Our first question is, *How is a pure Establishment of Christianity to be secured?* With such an Establishment, pure in doctrine, already existing, it might seem needless, perhaps, to make such an enquiry. But we are clearly entitled to go back, for the sake of the argument, to a time when it did not exist, and to ascertain how the great questions connected with the origin of such an institution may be met and determined. This Dr. Chalmers evidently admits; since he devotes his fourth Lecture to a consideration of the circumstances by which a government should be guided in this matter.

We set before ourselves, in imagination, then, a country, in which no religious, or, at all events, no Christian Establishment as yet exists. Its rulers, being Christian, deem it their duty to establish Christianity. But *what form of Christianity?* If there was a period when no perplexity would have existed on this point, it was a very brief one; since the professors of Christianity very early broke up into rival sects, and formed influential parties. It is obviously so now. The generic term *Christian* comprehends the Papist and the Protestant; the Arian, the Trinitarian and the Unitarian; the Episcopalian and Presbyterian; the Congregationalist and the Methodist; with many varieties besides. Which of these forms of Christianity shall the government establish? Is there to be supposed in kings, queens, and statesmen, a competency to determine these rival claims? If sovereigns and politicians may be supposed enlightened enough to discern the broad differences between Christianity and *Paganism*, or disinterested enough to eschew the despotic power secured to them by the religion of the Prophet; can they enter satisfactorily into the doctrine of the Trinity, the divine right of episcopacy, and the succession to the chair of St. Peter? Or is there a living creature who attaches a religious importance to these tenets at all, who would confide a decision upon them to such hands? If sovereigns and statesmen did decide, what should we have, but a chaos of blunders? Or if, as is far more probable, the decision would be made by some courtly priest, then what becomes of the fiction, that "a faith is to be selected" (I use Dr. Chalmers's words) *by the government?*

It is plainly impossible that a government should establish Christianity, without adopting one of the Christian sects. And the decision here is as difficult, and the danger as great, as if the choice lay among the varieties of *Paganism*. Popery and Protestantism charge each other with deadly errors. Trinitarians hold themselves at vital difference with Unitarians.

So that government is in danger of erecting a *Christian Establishment*, of so pernicious a character, as to be ruinous to the souls of men. What are governors, all unused as they are to theological studies—what are governors to do in this dilemma? Or what is to be the security of subjects, that even Christian statesmen do not commit on their behalf a perilous and irreparable error?

Dr. Chalmers is quite sensible of the difficulty we are insisting on. "We are aware," says he, (p. 117,) "of the summary and contemptuous rejection to which this proposition is liable—as if it would transform the senate-house into an arena of theological conflict, and senators into wrangling polemics, who, to be accomplished for their task, would need to grapple with whole libraries, with the tomes of mighty controversialists in former ages, or at least, it may be thought, to be deep read, both in the fathers of the Christian church, and in the fathers of our own reformation."

And what is his remedy? It is, in the first place, to separate the question he deems most easy of decision, that between Popery and Protestantism, and to dispose of it singly. "This," he tells us, "is a question that might be rightly entertained, and rightly decided, in any assembly of well-educated Englishmen," (p. 117,) not excepting the Houses of Parliament. He assures us, indeed, that he "could not imagine a more testing evidence of an incompetent and vulgarised Parliament, than that it should not be competent to decide the question between the merits of Protestantism and Popery," (p. 118.) Yet he does not seem to be quite sure that the British Parliament of the present age will not "endow Popery;" for he expresses his hope that, if such a calamity should happen, "there is still enough, not of fiery zeal, but of calm, resolute, and withal enlightened principle in the land, to resent the outrage—enough of energy, in the revolted sense of this great country, to meet and to overbear it," (p. 120.)

Let me be excused for stopping here a moment, to observe, that this is a strange way of designating and receiving, what Dr. Chalmers must acknowledge to be a legitimate use of legislative prerogative. He first lays it down that the state should endow Christian ministers; and then he recommends, that, if they happen to endow one particular set of Christian ministers, the people should "resent" it as an "outrage," and "overbear it" as a law. He is evidently afraid of his own principle; the meaning of which, as interpreted by himself, is, "You may establish Christianity, *provided you take my form of it.*" It is only for every denomination of Christians to follow his example, and then the rulers' prerogative of establishing Christianity, of which he is the advocate, will, upon his own authority, be given to the winds.

But, to return. That even a British Parliament, in the nineteenth century, should "endow Popery," is not (in Dr. Chalmers's opinion) quite impossible. What, then, must be thought of the same body in former times? At how many seasons, and for how long a period, would this have been their certain choice? Our northern antagonist, it is true, pronounces them, in consequence, "incompetent and vulgarised;" *but they were the legislators;* and he affirms it to be expedient, that Christianity should be established by the legislature—by a body, that is to say, branded by his own hand with "incompetency!"

So much for our security against Popery, in the formation of a religious Establishment, even by a Christian government. But this is only one of the dangers attending such an experiment. Supposing the government to have decided for Protestantism, *which of the Protestant sects shall it endow?*

"On what principle," says Dr. Chalmers, "ought the selection to be made? We have already seen that the principle is a very obvious one, and respecting which even statesmen, if but men of large and liberal education, should feel no difficulty, on which to reject that church which would subordinate

the authority of Scripture to the authority of man—or even place the decisions of their own sovereign pontiff on the same level with the declarations of the Bible. But there are other churches, other ecclesiastical bodies, that have all agreed in abjuring this corruption, and are alike free from any participation in it. Many, we should say the great majority, of our Protestant sects, hold the authority of Scripture paramount to all other authority; and are so far agreed in the interpretation of it, as to hold the same fundamental tenets; and, while differing in circumstances, to be at one on all the great and essential articles of faith. The government may be at no loss for reasons to eject Popery; but it may be at great loss for reasons to determine its preference of one shade or variety of Protestantism over all the rest—and that too in very proportion to the nearness of their agreement with each other," (p. 167.)

This question, "full of perplexity" as the Doctor admits it "may seem," he nevertheless thinks may be "easily disposed of;" and he attains this desirable end by declaring that most of the Protestant sects—"the great majority"—"nine tenths" of them—are so good, and so much alike, that there is nothing to choose between them.

"We hear," says the Doctor, "of their common faith, that is, of their agreement with the church in all vital and essential topics; and this, in opposition to the bigots within the Establishment, we heartily accord to the great majority of the Dissenters, in both parts of the island. But, if they agree in all that is essential, what is the character of the topics on which they differ? There can be no other reply to this, than that they must be the non-essentials of Christianity," (p. 174.)

And therefore the state may take any one of them indifferently; any one being good enough for the honours and emoluments of an Establishment, and none so much better than its fellows, as to deserve a preference. This is not very complimentary, certainly, to either of the "party-coloured varieties," (I use the Dr.'s epithets,) which have happened to be enthroned in the high places of England and Scotland. According to him, the divine right and apostolical succession of Episcopacy, and the solemn league and covenant of Presbyterianism, are nothing more than the "caprices, or whimsical peculiarities, in which, in the very wantonness of freedom,

men have chosen to besport themselves." O fie! Dr. Chalmers.

But the entire statement, (begging the Doctor's pardon,) is an evasion of the difficulty. To be of any force, his argument required him to affirm that not only *most*, but *all* the Protestant sects are substantially alike. Even if matters of church polity, in which evangelical Protestants differ, might be reckoned immaterial, (in which certainly some of them would not concur) there are diversities of unquestionable moment; of which the Socinian controversy may supply an example. Dr. Chalmers will not pretend that this (to use his own term) is a "minute" or "paltry" difference. But what is to guide members of Parliament and hereditary legislators to a right decision upon it? If they manage but badly such profound subjects as the doctrines of the Trinity and vicarious sacrifice, he may again vent his wrath, by pronouncing them "incompetent and vulgarised;" but still *they are the legislators*, and as such it is expedient, according to him, that they should establish Christianity. What pledge can he give us that they shall not establish a Socinian Christianity?

But this matter is not one of speculation merely—the lights of history are shed on it. When Constantine, whose conduct the Doctor so warmly eulogises, established Christianity, it soon became a question which of the Christian sects should bask in the sunshine of courtly patronage; and the verdict of the state was then given in favour of the Arian heresy. Sovereign after sovereign has established Popery, over almost the whole of Europe; and, that the churches of England and Scotland are not Popish now, has arisen from causes very different from either the piety or the policy of the governing powers. These are the *actual fruits* of confiding the establishment of Christianity to governments; a measure which, therefore, far from being expedient, either in theory or in practice, is one of tremendous hazard—it may be said, of inevitable mischief.

A pure Establishment cannot be secured ; it is better, therefore, that none should be created.

II. But, supposing a pure Establishment were secured, *what are the elements of its power?* This is the second question we proposed to consider. A religious Establishment pure in doctrine, as those of the British islands are in the main admitted to be, is able, we are told, to carry the light and power of Christianity "through all the families of the land." If we ask by what means, we are referred to its "machinery"—its cutting up the country into parishes, or other sections and consigning the "Christian surveillance" of the population of each section, to an endowed minister, charged with their instruction.

Now we might question—and we shall hereafter question—the adaptation of this machinery. But, for the present, we will admit its adaptation. And then we say, that at least one condition is necessary to its working out the design—*the ministers must be pious men.* If, on the contrary, it should happen that some—a large proportion—or nearly the whole—of the teachers should be ignorant of the religion they are to teach, or unconcerned about the welfare of the souls committed to their charge; if it should happen that they loved sinecures and pluralities more than self-denying labour; or gambling, fox hunting, and politics, more than the preaching of the Gospel; then, I say, that a religious Establishment would be, not a blessing, but a curse. And Dr. Chalmers acknowledges, that an Establishment may be a most effective instrument of conveyance for evil as well as good, for a corrupt as well as scriptural theology, (p. 18.) We ask, then, *Does a national religious Establishment afford any guarantee that this shall not be the character of her ministers?*

Who is to appoint them? This question might be asked as one of theory. On the principle of a national Establishment, who

ought to appoint them? Doubtless the government, who pay them. And if this were to be the fact, what would follow from it, but what now actually follows to a great and deplorable extent, that ecclesiastical appointments would be made on political grounds, and that men would be made priests, not because of their meritorious adaptation to the duties of their office, but as an inducement to political devotion and a reward for political service? Will any man maintain the expediency of this?

An instructive view of the rules, which, as by a tacit but well-understood convention, are come into operation, in relation to the church patronage held by the government, is exhibited in the life (recently published) of the late Bishop of Norwich, by his son, Archdeacon Bathurst. The venerable Archdeacon complains bitterly that the Bishop's political services had not been rewarded by ecclesiastical promotion, not only for the Bishop himself, but for his family also. He, neglected man! is pining on a preferment of two thousand per annum! He had a brother who shot himself, and he lays the blame of this upon the "ungrateful" statesmen, who, to a younger son of a political partisan, would give nothing more than a living of five hundred a year!

Or, if we take the matter, not as it *ought* to be, but as it *is*, and look at ecclesiastical patronage as dispersed through the various hands which now possess it, the result will be similar. Livings in the gift of colleges go in rotation; so that it is a mere lottery, whether you have a wise man or a fool, with the chances, in relation to spiritual wisdom, much in favour of the latter. Livings in the gift of private persons are notoriously held for family aggrandizement; and if there be no son, or other relation, to enjoy them, the next presentation is often sold by auction, to the highest bidder. Instances of the faithful and conscientious use of church patronage are comparatively rare, and form only a small exception to an almost universal rule.

Than the unblushing abuse of it nothing can be either more scandalous, or more mischievous, as Dr. Chalmers well knows, and doubtless bitterly deplores.

In such a state of things, the ministers of the national church—with whatever exceptions—can, generally, be nothing but a set of worldly men; at once ignorant and incapable, and not in any respect fitted for the high and holy duties of the office assigned to them. And so it has been in fact. With the very great improvement which has taken place in the Church of England within the last few years, out of her twenty thousand clergy, not more than two thousand are believed now to be evangelical. One in ten is a small proportion. But there have been long seasons when there was not one in a thousand; when, therefore, to use Dr. Chalmers's own words, the boasted "machinery" "subverted the propagation of corruption and error;" "furnished evil with all facilities for its rapid march and full circulation through the families of the land;" and conveyed "a moral poison, by which to vitiate the hearts and habits of the people," (pp. 19, 20.) And yet it is expedient, we are told, that there should be a national Establishment of Christianity!

The corrupt use of ecclesiastical patronage, is an evil not only great but incurable. It is impossible to put the disposal of fifteen thousand benefices and dignities into safe hands. No parties can be found to whom such a vast trust could be confided, with any security, or with any probability, of its being faithfully employed, or without the certainty of its being abused. Fidelity in such a matter requires a high appreciation of the spiritual interests of men, a solemn sense of responsibility, and a readiness and extent of self-denial, which might not always be found in the sincerely pious, and which is assuredly far above the ordinary level of statesmen and church patrons. No such patronage, therefore, ought to have been created; or, which is the same thing, there should have been no national Establishment of Christianity.

The inevitable abuse of church patronage is a radical and fundamental objection to Establishments, of which no ingenuity can rid them—a millstone about the neck of the Utopian fair one, which may well sink her in the depths of the sea.

There is yet another aspect of this case. Concerning the ministers of a national church, we have asked, on the one hand, Who is to appoint them? we now ask, on the other, *Who will be attracted?* The men who are wanted are men of fervent piety, self-denying zeal, and untiring industry; the workman being undoubtedly worthy of his hire. But, in the first place, here is no manner of necessity for the work being done at all. The holder of a living is under no responsibility for performing more than a cursory routine of services; and even these he may perform by a cheaply paid curate. If he likes to renounce the toil and enjoy the income; to delight himself in the honour of his clerical station, and to mix in gay or elevated society, he may. Nay, if he likes to live in licentiousness and debaucheries, he may; if he will only avoid those faults of extreme grossness, by which the average tone of morals would be scandalised. Here is nothing, therefore, to repel the ungodly from the clerical office, or to obstruct his entrance into it. Every thing may easily enough be harmonized with his tastes and indulgences.

On the contrary, there is much to attract men of this stamp. There are genteel livings for men who dislike work, or who never could succeed in it; a passport through the polite world, and an opportunity of gratifying every desire, without toiling for the means, or being answerable for the use of them. The incomes vary from a few scores to many thousand of pounds sterling per annum; the lowest being prizes to the poor—the highest having attractions for the rich and noble. While some repose in a single benefice, others luxuriate in several; while some have preferment *with* cure of souls, others find still more agreeable promotion *with-*

out it; canonries and prebends afford full "leisure (according to Dr. Chalmers) for pious authorship," (!) (the canon-residentiary of St. Paul's, and Peter Plymley's Letters, to wit;) some become bishops, and some archbishops, both being also peers of the realm; and every man has before him the hope, that, if he plays his cards well, he may rise, from however humble a station, to the highest altitudes in the church. Now we do not say, that pious men are bound to eschew all these advantages, or to carry the "*nolo episcopari*" always to a practical fulfilment. Neither do we say, that, in the midst of such circumstances, pious men may not do, or have not done, their duty nobly. But we do say, that such a state of things holds out inducements to the ministerial office, which other than pious men are liable to feel; and that shoals of such men are constantly attracted by them. It appeals directly to the indolence, the ambition and the cupidity of mankind. The church in this aspect, presents an inviting career to men who have none but secular and selfish aims; and the clerical profession, so baited, is eminently adapted to become, what it is known to have become in fact, an incitement to the aspiring among the middling and lower orders, and a resource for the needy—a sort of Refuge for the Destitute—among the aristocracy. High and low, in a word, combine in regarding the wealth of the church as a vast carcase, on which, like birds of prey, they are entitled to gorge themselves, till they can hold no more.

And this, again, like the former, is an evil *inseparable* from national religious Establishments. It may vary in amount, according to the wealth of Establishments respectively, but in proportion to their wealth is the mischief. Here is then, not only no security for a faithful ministry, but no possibility of a faithful ministry, otherwise than occasionally and accidentally. With such inducements to the clerical office, the clergy generally *must* be worldly men. And if the clergy be worldly men, it matters not how thickly you stud the

country with them—they *cannot propagate religion*. To the actual existence of such a state of things, not in the church of England only, but under the influence of Establishments generally, their hardy champion himself may be cited, as an unwilling but decisive witness. With many opportunities and much necessity for it, he nowhere ventures to affirm the fidelity of a state clergy in a single instance. He nowhere ventures to deny their universal corruption; but, when he approaches this subject, feeling, it would seem, that he is on tender ground, he carefully asserts that this corruption is "*not necessary*;" that state endowments of religious teachers *may* be consistent with pure motives and self-denying zeal. And this is all on which he can venture! He tacitly admits the mischievous tendency of the system, and the actual mischievous result; but he thinks the clergy *may* be saved, "so as by fire." The possibility of miracles we do not deny, but we know of no reason to expect them. It is for us rather to go by experience, a far safer guide than speculation; and since in all ages, and under all circumstances, a clergy endowed by the state *have been* corrupt, and are so to the present time—with unfrequent exceptions only—there can be no error in concluding that, in the present condition of human nature, it *cannot* be otherwise.

Let us now sum up the argument. An Establishment *can* evangelise a country, says Dr. Chalmers, since she can stud it with teachers. We say, on the contrary, an Establishment *cannot* evangelise a country, since she cannot provide teachers fitted for the task. And let us appeal for a confirmation of our conclusions respectively, to the testimony of facts. Whether an Establishment can or cannot diffuse Christianity through a land, surely ought not now to be a matter of speculation. The experiment has been tried long enough, one would think, to warrant a decision of the question. The pure, apostolical church of England, for example, in its Protestant reformed state, has been adopted by the

state for about three hundred years; and if it was one of the properties of such an Establishment to diffuse universally a vital piety, we should surely in such a lengthened period, see some signs of its fulfilment. But we know, on the contrary, that, during the greater part of this time, the progress of religion within and by means of the Establishment was deplorably slow, if perceptible at all; and that the revival within it, during the last fifty years, is merely the re-action of the revival without. It is not too much to say, that the church, instead of even helping forward the cause of pure and undefiled religion, has been the great bulwark of popular ignorance and vice, and has done more to retard the advance of godliness than all causes besides. In Scotland, the case, if less aggravated, is not essentially different. But what is it in Ireland? where Bishops were so thick, that it became necessary to sweep away ten of them by one Act of Parliament; through a great part of which churches and priests are almost as numerous as people to attend on them; and where yet ignorance, vice, and irreligion stalk abroad like giants, as in mockery of the richest church in the world! An Establishment can evangelise a country! Then shame be to ye, Establishments of England, Scotland, and Ireland! that ye have left the dark places of the land in darkness until now, and in a darkness too often aggravated, alike by the pretensions and the incapacity of the priests ye have endowed!

It might be thought that the case thus made out, not *for*, but *against* the expediency of national churches, would appeal with no inconsiderable force to the wise and the good *within their pale*; but, however this may be, with such facts before our eyes, it is in vain to call upon *us* to believe that national religious Establishments can fulfil the boast which is made on their behalf. And, if they cannot do this, then we become well entitled to speak of the nuisances and mischiefs with which they are connected. For the

sake of a country's evangelisation, we might have borne with them; but, if this cannot be obtained, the only reason for endurance is taken away. Useless as it is for the religious instruction of the people, why should we look with complacency on an institution, which is essentially a tyranny over conscience; and which, being founded in wrong, scatters public and social mischiefs through the whole sphere of its influence? For this there is created a privileged sect, a dominant and domineering priesthood, and a spirit of haughty church ascendancy, trampling on all other religious communities, although, according to their own champion, every one of them is as worthy of honour. For this there is extorted from us our money, and wrested from us our civil rights; while our honour even is not left us, untarnished with a gratuitous suspicion of disloyalty. For this there is established a bitter political party—for such a state clergy inevitably become—hostile to popular rights, hating a liberal administration, adverse to all improvement, deaf to all calls of humanity and justice, and clamorous only when they cry, Give, give! And because such an institution is called a religious Establishment, it is to be smiled upon and revered! How much are these mouldering monuments of ancient priestcraft indebted to the artifice of giving noble names, and blessed semblances, to atrocious things! And how truly, when names and things come to be identical, will they receive the unmitigated rebuke of abashed and repentant nations!

THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL RELIGIOUS ESTABLISHMENTS,
CONSIDERED IN THREE LECTURES.

Lecture the Third,

DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY EVENING, JUNE 13TH, 1838,

BY THE REV. J. H. HINTON, A.M.,

AT DEVONSHIRE-SQUARE CHAPEL, BISHOPSGATE.

HAVING, in our first lecture, discussed the *principle* of national religious Establishments, we took up in the second their *expediency*. Their advocates, we found, set up a claim on their behalf, that *they are able* to evangelise a country, and *they alone*. We separated the former part of this claim from the latter, and endeavoured to show, that, whether it could be done by any other means or not, the evangelisation of a country *could not* be effected by a national Establishment. A most pregnant instance in confirmation of our argument has presented itself since the delivery of that lecture, in the melancholy outbreak of religious fanaticism, which has occurred in the neighbourhood of Canterbury. Courtenay, it seems, was a madman; and against the recurrence of such forms of insanity as his there is, of course, no guarantee. But his followers were not insane, nor were they at all below the level of general knowledge and religious culture, characterising the agricultural population generally, whether peasants or farmers; not a few persons, however, of both these classes, believed in Courtenay's divinity, and hailed him as their saviour! Nothing can be more profound, or more touchingly genuine, than the confidence they reposed in him, and the worship they addressed to him. And who were these people? Were they heathens, inhabitants of a land immersed in Mahomedan or Pagan superstition? No. They dwelt in a Christian country, within the pale of a national Establishment of that holy religion, under the constant instruction of well-endowed priests, and within sight, if not under the shadow, of a cathedral, in which was the throne of

an archbishop, together with stalls for prebendaries, and seats for canons and other ecclesiastics, almost without end! And similar had been the residence of their fathers for ages. But this is the machinery of such mighty power, according to Dr. Chalmers, to carry the light and life of Christianity "through all the families of the land." How comes it, then, we ask, to have answered its purpose no better? Whence is it, that ignorance and superstition almost incredible have descended unmodified from generation to generation, so that the fanaticism of the nineteenth century bears an almost exact resemblance to that of the same region six hundred years ago? Whence is this, but that national religious Establishments are powerless for the diffusion of religion; that gorgeous edifices and rich foundations are to the clergy, what old elms are to the rooks and steeples to the jackdaws, places to breed in, to fatten, and to sleep; and that irreligion of every kind has no securer nestling-place, or more thriving nursery, than in the very midst of those state-pampered dignitaries, whose pious leisure is theoretically devoted to its extermination? We might here content ourselves. To have established this, is to have decided the controversy; since the capability of national churches to diffuse Christianity is the only ground, on which, with the wise and good, the vindication of them is attempted.

It will be present in your recollection, however, that what we have asserted of national Establishments, namely, that they cannot effectually diffuse the Gospel, is, by the advocates of those institutions, asserted of all modes of religious exertion besides.

We say they cannot; they say we cannot. And if both affirmations are true, our discussion places Christianity in this unfortunate dilemma—that its thorough diffusion is impossible, there being no means by which it can be effected. Such a conclusion is not only most melancholy, but incredible. And as, for the sake of avoiding it, we are not at all disposed to revoke the sentence we have passed on Establishments, we are called upon, perhaps, to say, whether we admit the allegations of our opponents, when they assert the incapacity of a different system. Now we say without scruple, that we do not admit these allegations; that, while piety cannot be extended “through all the families of the land” by an Establishment, this may (under the blessing of God) be done by other methods, which are at once of mighty energy for their end, and altogether free from those weighty objections which hang, like inevitable doom, about the neck of national churches.

We shall most effectually make our way good in this matter, by first repelling the attacks which have been made against unestablished modes of spreading the Gospel; and those made by Dr. Chalmers more particularly, as, at the present moment, urged with the greatest force, and engaging the chief attention.

1. Our northern assailant falls foul, in the first place, of “the system of a free trade in Christianity,” which he says the Dissenters have adopted, “as the grand specific, on the strength of which they may dispense with a national Establishment of religion,” (p. 72,) and which he vehemently affirms is not sufficient for such a purpose.

Now, really it is quite news to a great many, and perhaps to all of us, that we have adopted “the system of a free trade in Christianity.” In all likelihood, very few of us even understand what that system is. We must be indebted to Dr. Chalmers for explaining it to us, before we can say whether we adopt it or not. Hear, then, his exposition of it.

“By the system of a free trade in commerce, its various exchanges are left to the pure operation of demand and supply; and these two, it is thought, should be permitted, without interference, to regulate and qualify each other. When the demand for any particular commodity increases, it will be the interest of the dealers to provide it in larger quantity than before; or, when the demand is lessened, it will be their care to reduce the supply accordingly—so as that the market shall not be overstocked with any article, beyond the extent to which it is sought after. It admits, we hold, of the clearest demonstration, that it is unwise to interfere with this law of action and reaction—or, as it may be termed, with this natural law of political economy. The supply rises and falls, just as the demand rises and falls. Government should make no attempt to restrain the supply beneath this point, by means of a prohibition, or to encourage it above this point, by means of a bounty. Such an interference is an offence to all wise and enlightened economists; and resented by them as a disturbing force, that would violate the harmonies of a beautiful and well-going mechanism.” (pp. 39, 40.)

This is “the system of free a trade.” But who says this is the system of nonconformity? Was this principle laid down by Owen, Baxter, and Howe? Was it held by Watts, Doddridge, and Kiffin? Was it the strong hold of Towgood and Graham? Or has it been put forth by Conder and Binney? It has been broached by none of them; nor does Dr. Chalmers give the name of a single Dissenter, out of whose mouth it has been heard, through the entire controversy. Who is it then that has advocated “a free trade in Christianity?” The following gentlemen — “Turgot, Smith, and others.” (p. 42.) “Turgot, Smith, and others?” Who are these? These are not the fathers of nonconformity—nor are their names endeared to us by fond and hallowed associations. Turgot was a Frenchman, of whom we know nothing. As for Smith, we do know something of the name of Smith; but, gentle hearer, you must not imagine it to be John Pye Smith, *nomen præclarum*, whom Chalmers has in his eye; it is a Dr. Adam Smith, from the far north. And for the “others” whom he mentions, they constitute, it seems *ignobile pecus*, a base herd, whose names are not worth his giving, nor our inquiring after. And I ask not only *who*, but *what* are these

men? Are they Dissenters? No. Are they theologians? No. What then are they? Writers and speculators on political economy! By what rule, I demand, are these men understood as laying down the basis of dissent, and setting forth the principles of Dissenters?

But let us look at the principle of free trade, now that it is propounded to us, and see whether we do adopt it or not. It is, we are told, that, with respect to articles of commerce, such as tea and sugar, for example, the demand should be left to regulate the supply; and that government should not interfere, either to encourage or discourage the trade, whether by duties or by bounties.

"At this rate," says Dr. Chalmers, "the supply, whether as respects its amount upon the whole, or the proportion of it in various places, will be made to suit the taste of the customers. It will betake itself to those places where there is, what economists term, an effective demand for it—that is, where there is wealth enough and will enough, to ensure a remunerating price for the expense of its preparation. A free trade in commerce is sure to avoid or abandon those places, where, whether from the languor of the demand, or the poverty of the inhabitants, it would be exposed to a losing trade. By a free trade in Christianity, let the lessons of the Gospel follow the same law of movement; and these lessons will cease to be taught in every place, where there is either not enough of liking for the thing, or not enough of money for the purchase of it." (pp. 40, 41.)

Now we say in a moment, that, if this be the "free trade in Christianity," it never has been and never shall be, either our principle or our practice. We repudiate and abhor it. We complain, too, that an act of grosser injustice was never done to an adversary in any controversy, than has been done to the Dissenters by Dr. Chalmers's attempt to fasten the "free trade principle" upon them. But he argues blindfold; and we will impute it to no ill design. Yet how could any man imagine it was our principle, who could describe our conduct so accurately, as in the following sentences?

"There now seems on all hands a strong practical sense, if not an explicit and avowed one, of the insufficiency of the free trade system, for the supply of the world with the lessons of Christianity. This

has long been acknowledged, or at least acted upon, in the business of foreign missions, or in the business of supplying foreign parts with the knowledge of the Gospel. Instead of waiting till the demand for Christianity comes of its own accord, from men ready with an indemnifying or remunerating price, to cover all the expenses of bringing it to their shore—the dispensers of Christianity go forth on their missionary voyage, in quest of men to whom they might offer the pearl of greatest value, and on whom to urge the acceptance of it, without money and without price. Instead of discerning in this process any of the methods of ordinary trade, there is here a reversal of all its principles; and what comes nearer to the point at issue, there is a like reversal of them in the home, as in the foreign missionary enterprise. We have the Home Missionary Society, that would never have been thought of, but for the experimental feeling of destitution and depravity at our own doors, which required the very same treatment with the heathenism of distant lands. * * * * The agents of this Society, the men who labour under them, in the streets of our city or the villages of our country population, are not maintained on the principle of a market—do not receive their necessary hire, in the shape of equivalents from those who are benefited by them; but in the shape of a bounty from those who employ them. We say that all they who have become parties in such an institution," (that is, the entire body of Dissenters,) "stand committed * * * against the system of a free trade in Christianity," (pp. 71, 73.)

The principle of a "free trade in Christianity" being disclaimed by us, all the rhetoric which the Dr. employs on the exposure of its insufficiency is, of course, thrown away. No doubt it is perfectly true, that there is in mankind "no natural hungering and thirsting after righteousness;" that they are sunk into a state of desperate and cherished apathy, in relation to spiritual things; and that, left to themselves, they will never seek after a supply of Gospel truth. No inference can be more certain, than that which Dr. Chalmers derives from this state of things—namely, that, if mankind are ever to possess the Gospel, *it must be carried to them*. But this proves nothing *against us*. It is rather our vindication. This is the very principle we have been holding, and the very thing we have been doing. This is "the head and front of our offending," that we have been running every where, preaching the Gospel; regarding neither the sacred boundaries of parishes, nor the equally sacred slumbers

of incumbents. And here, all on a sudden, and certainly without intending it, our great antagonist supplies us, in the very midst of the enemies' camp, with a triumphant vindication! *We thank him.*

His argument, however, is far from working equally well for the Establishments he wishes to defend. From the acknowledged indifference of men to their spiritual wants, it obviously results, not only that the Gospel should be carried to them, but that it should be carried to them in the quickest and most copious manner—by all available means, and by all capable hands. This would be an argument for national religious Establishments, *if they fulfilled this condition.* But they do not, and cannot fulfil it. In the first place, they have no aptitude at perceiving or appreciating a state of spiritual destitution. They generate, on the contrary, a tenacious disposition to overlook it, and even to deny its existence; inasmuch as it is inconsistent with the theory of a national Establishment, which assumes that the religious interests of the nation are adequately cared for, and implies a charge of neglect or incompetency, in some of the numerous functionaries on whom this care is practically devolved. And when a state of spiritual destitution is ascertained and acknowledged, the remedial efforts of an Establishment, are exceedingly difficult and tardy. If they move at all, with the inevitable fate of great bodies, they move slowly; while ignorance and sin, in their work of destruction, are eminently rapid. And, being what they are, even the most vigorous movements of religious Establishments can be of but little avail; since the instruction they provide, like the teachers they send, is without any guarantee of its purity. To all this it must be added, that they have no readiness to avail themselves of co-operation, for the attainment of the desired end; but, on the contrary, have a tendency to hinder and repress it. Wherever you may attempt to preach the Gospel, you are within the limits of some parish; and you are met

by rector, vicar, or curate, who says, "I am intrusted with the care of these souls; it is my business, and not yours; you are intruding on the sphere of my labour, and infringing on my prerogative." This remonstrance is sometimes very warmly and unceremoniously pressed; as it has recently been, to my own knowledge, in the parish of Aldermaston, in the heart of Berkshire, where popular insult and violence, of the most loathsome and appalling kinds, have been used to second and enforce it. In this manner, the Establishment of Christianity extensively *prevents* the Gospel from being preached to the perishing, and shuts them up in a hopeless darkness. If there were no national church, Aldermaston, and a thousand villages besides, might be evangelised; but now they cannot—and the only reason why they cannot is, *that there is a state parson in each of them!*

Certainly another view of the principle of "free trade" may be taken, besides that with which Dr. Chalmers has entertained us. If it means that, by government bounties, "the market shall not be overstocked with any article, beyond the extent to which it is sought after," it clearly means also, that no person shall be prevented from taking his goods there at his own risk, to see whether he can dispose of them or not. If free trade is opposed, on the one hand, to a system of bounties, it is, on the other, equally opposed to monopolies. In this view (which it evidently did not suit Dr. Chalmers's purpose to explain) we are willing to admit, that "a free trade in Christianity" would be very acceptable to the Dissenters. A state-church is essentially a monopoly, and has all the evils of a monopoly, in their most imitating and mischievous forms.

Although it is not for money, nor for price, yet there is a principle, even in spiritual things, on which a demand will create supply. The ungodly, we are told, are careless about religion, and will not pay for its ministrations. Very well. Then let

the men of the world, whose only object is gain, abandon them. But there are other men in the world, besides these; men of heartfelt piety and Christian benevolence, to whom necessity and destitution—aye, to whom ignorance and apathy themselves—make an appeal which cannot be resisted. There are men who will preach the Gospel without being paid for it, otherwise than by the approbation of the God whom they serve. Of how many evidences of this must Dr. Chalmers have been aware! What warm eulogiums does he in this very volume, pour out on this admirable zeal! And yet he pleads for Establishments, which forbid its action and fence it in on every side! A striking example has recently been furnished to us. The public heard with delight of the conduct of some devoted clergy of the church of Ireland, who, panting to save the lost, formed a lovely and noble institution, the Irish Church Home Missionary Society; deeming, as well they might, that, in such a country, and in such an age, the rules of ecclesiastical discipline would not be rigorously enforced against so apostolical a work of faith, and labour of love. But they were mistaken. An incumbent prosecutes his brother priest for uncanonically preaching in his parish, and the ecclesiastical court declares the whole Society, and all its operations, unlawful. This is resisting a free trade in Christianity, with a vengeance! Here is demand creating supply; and the monopolists of the state-church keep it out of the market! They will neither give the bread of life themselves, nor let any one else give it! And this is the system which Dr. Chalmers strives to uphold!

2. After having disposed of the “political economists,” Dr. Chalmers directs his battery against the “Voluntaries;” who, he tells us, differ from the “free trade” men, in being ready to convey to their perishing fellow-sinners, by the aid of Christian benevolence, more of the Gospel than they might be able or willing to pay for. These persons have lately been

making such a noise in Scotland, and have so sturdily resisted the demand for church extension there, that there can be no room to question, either the good will or the intended vigour of the attack. And what think you is the substance of it? A vehement and laboured affirmation that the abettors of the voluntary principle hold also the very principle of Establishments! You shall have this startling accusation in his own words.

“Innumerable are the appeals made by the Voluntaries themselves to the generosity of the public; in behalf of their labouring congregations; and the call is responded to by thousands, who feel that to give for the religious education of the people is the best and most productive of all benevolence—and their contributions, whether from an impulse of piety or of patriotism, are not more willingly made by the one party than they are welcomed by the other. It is not very discriminating, we think, thus to hail the liberalities of private individuals, and to refuse or regard them as incompetent and wrong, when they are congregated in the form of one great liberality from the state * * * A parliamentary vote in aid of religious education, is, both in principle and effect, but an example of the voluntary principle.” (pp. 91, 93.)

So, quoth the champion of Establishments, “our cause is practically and substantially gained, for this external voluntarism, so far from being in conflict with the principle of a national Establishment, is in perfect and precise accordance therewith.” (p. 94.)

When Dr. Chalmers speaks of his cause being “practically and substantially gained,” he shows the characteristic tact of his country; since he evidently means, that he has entangled the Voluntaries in such a manner, that they can no longer object to a grant to the Kirk of Scotland out of the national revenue. And we will confess that it would have been a triumph warranting a little self-gratulation, *had he achieved it*. But we have a word or two to say, before we admit this conclusion.

In order to make out his case, he seems to affirm that there is no difference between a grant from the government and the liberality of individuals. “A parliamentary vote,” says he, “is, both in principle and effect, but an example of the volun-

tary principle." Now it might naturally be supposed, that he would rest this assertion on an implied comparison between individuals and governments; to the effect, that, as single persons might give what they pleased of their property, so the aggregate of persons constituting a government, might, as a government, give what they pleased of the property of the nation. It would have been easy to reply to such a representation, that the national revenues are not the property of governors, in the same way in which an individual person's property is his own; that they belong to statesmen only in trust, for the purposes of the nation's welfare, and in accordance with the true design of secular governments. If rulers *give*, let them give as individuals, that they may give what is their own; but, if they give out of the public purse, they give what is another's, what in part is *mine*, and what they have no business to be liberal with. If Dr. Chalmers, or any other person, wants any of my money in a *way of religious benevolence*, I am the person whom he should ask. Why should he ask Lord Melbourne for it? Or who is Lord Melbourne, that he should presume to give it? I should call this no sample of the voluntary principle, but one of violence and robbery.

In truth, however, Dr. Chalmers spares us the trouble of this reply, inasmuch as he rests his assertion upon a totally different ground. When his language is closely examined, it is found to be selected with great care, and adapted to a special modification of his general argument. He had been laying down the general duty of *governments* to endow the teachers of religion. But on this occasion we hear nothing of the government, but all about the *parliament*,—one kind of government certainly, but far from being a type of the whole class. And the reason for his using this term is, that he founds his assertion of the identity of a parliamentary grant and a voluntary gift, upon the fiction that Parliament expresses the will of the people.

"For in truth," says he, "the very spirit which prompts the individual gifts, needs only to be strong enough and general enough, to call forth a gift from the treasury. This were but one of the many examples, in which the voice of a country is found to have an influential controul over the acts of a government. Let the sentiment prevail that is good to pay for the Christian instruction of those who either cannot or will not pay for it themselves; and a government, when adding its own great national subscription to those of the many individuals who have preceded and pointed out the way to it, is not thwarting the sentiment by which they were actuated, but only giving further expression, or larger and more lasting effect to it. There is no fear lest a popular government, like ours, will award a grant for the erection or endowment of churches, till they anticipate a virtual ratification of the deed and a preponderance of feeling in its favour from without—or till encouraged to the measure, if not by the universal majority of tax-payers, at least by that class of them whose larger payments constitute the vast majority of by far the larger part of the revenue of the nation. In as far then as they are concerned, we behold in an ecclesiastical provision by the state, an example of external voluntarism, or a willing public contributing of their wealth to the Christian instruction of the common people, through the medium of a willing government." (p. 92.)

This sudden deference of the champion of national churches to the feelings of the people is highly gratifying; although, certainly, one can see the reason of it, namely that, in England, the people hold the strings of the public purse. Had it been in the power of Lord Melbourne to endow a few hundred ministers of the Scottish Kirk, *without* permission of Parliament, the Dr. would no doubt have proved the identity of such a grant with the voluntary principle by a totally different process. But it is well—and somewhat of a novelty moreover—to have the feelings of the people regarded at all by the oligarchs of religious Establishments; nor will we scrutinize too closely the motives of this promising deference. And we think we can tell Dr. Chalmers, that, if the feelings of the people of England, Scotland, and Ireland, *are* consulted and expressed in reference to the scheme of church extension in the north, there is neither "fear" for us, nor hope for him, that the British Parliament will lend themselves to it. Should they do so, it will be in violation of the feelings, and the strong feelings too

of a large part—I may say of the majority—of the inhabitants of the three kingdoms; and if there be any sincerity in the apparent deference with which he affects to treat the feelings of the people—if it is only a gift from a *willing* nation that he could justify a grant from the treasury—we may hope that he will refuse an endowment which they do not sanction, and which to them will be a matter, not of “voluntaryism,” but of coercion.

We have further to remark on this subject, that by introducing this appeal to the feelings of the people, and pleading for a treasury grant only when, and because, it will be an expression of the national will, Dr. Chalmers entirely shifts the ground of his argument, and overthrows all he has done before. He has previously been depicting the people as immersed in ignorance, and sunk in apathy, and this to such an extent, that they never could be expected to pay for the ministrations of Christian teachers, nor even to welcome them, when gratuitously pressed upon their regard: and hence he inferred the duty of *government* to “select a faith” for the people, and to endow a host of teachers, necessarily without any regard to the popular voice. But a vast change has suddenly taken place on this same people, as by the wand of a magician. It is now a public, in which “the sentiment prevails, that it is good to pay for the Christian instruction of those who cannot or will not pay for it themselves;” “a willing public, contributing of their wealth to the Christian instruction of the common people.” And it is now *only* on the ground of such a state of enlightened and fruitful piety among the nation at large, that he pretends to justify an application of the national resources to religious purposes. “There is no fear,” says he, “that a popular government, like ours, will award a grant for the erection or endowment of churches, *till they anticipated a virtual ratification of the deed, by a preponderance of feeling in its favour from without.*” The decision thus thrown

by Dr. Chalmers *into* the hands of the people, is clearly, by his own argument, taken out *out of* the hands of the government, in which he had formerly placed it. We tell sovereigns and statesmen, therefore, that they are *not* entitled to “select a faith” for their subjects, and to endow teachers of the faith they have selected. They ought to leave it to the people, and do as *they* may bid them. Do they ask who is our authority? — The Reverend Thomas Chalmers, doctor in divinity, and lecturer to the court, bishops, ministers, parliament and royal family of England, “on the Establishment and extension of national churches.”

But what now becomes of his accusation, that the abettors of voluntary liberality hold the money principle of Establishments? That principle is, and always has been, that rulers may endow religious teachers with public money, whether the people approve of it or not; to which principle no man can pretend for a moment that the practice of voluntary contribution gives the slightest sanction. We do not, therefore, hold the principle of Establishments. But neither does Dr. Chalmers. He will have treasury grants *only if* the nation be willing. Behold him, therefore, a convert to “Voluntaryism!” There is indeed a change, and a marvellous one; but it is not that *we* have come round to *his* principle, but that *he* has come round to *ours*. Give me “a willing nation,” says this chamæleon of a reasoner; and so say we—give us “a willing nation”—that is a nation *every individual* in which is willing, for the public revenue to be so applied—for, if there remained one unwilling, *to him* it would be an act of oppression and wrong, of which a genuine “voluntary” would never be guilty. But never, surely could a more preposterous notion be entertained, than that an entire “nation” should be “willing” to spend large sums of its money annually in the endowment of a religious sect, privileged at once to slumber over the important duty it monopo-

lizes, and, in its waking moments, to scowl and trample on all besides.

It is evident that this laboured attack on the voluntaries is directed, not against their principles, but only against their consistency. "You oppose a treasury grant to us," says Dr. Chalmers, "but you ought not; since you appeal to the liberality of individuals, and we only appeal to the liberality of the nation." Now if this is any thing more than hypocrisy, it is an acknowledgment that *in principle* we are right, and that the Dr. is concurrent with us. We make a gratifying record of this fact.

3. Our determined antagonist meets us at another point. He proclaims that voluntary churches cannot "localize," a process without which the whole of an ignorant population cannot be "overtaken." Hence he contends for an Establishment, because it may — and should — be made "territorial." Hear his own words.

"And first, as to what is meant by a territorial Establishment. The circumstance of its being an Establishment, involves in it a legal provision for the clergyman. But, over and above this, suppose, that, in return for this provision, this clergyman has a certain geographical district, whether in town or country, assigned to him; and that he is expected to take an ecclesiastical cognizance of all the families within its limits. To perfect this arrangement, they must stand so related to his church, as to have a right of preference over all extra-parochial families to the occupation of its sittings; and he, on the other hand, should be so related to his parish, as, if not to have a right of entry into all the houses, at least to be bound in point of duty to make a tender to every householder who is willing to receive him of such ecclesiastical attentions and services as his time will permit him to bestow, and which might be conducive to the Christian good of himself and of his family. In other words, he is bound to superadd as far as the people will let him, week-day and household to his Sabbath-day and pulpit ministrations. He is the minister not of a congregation only, as far the greater number of our unendowed ministers are, but he is the minister both of a congregation and a parish." (pp. 135 and 136.)

"What we want is to place his church in the middle of such a territory as we have now specified, and to lay upon him a bark, for the accomplishment of which we would allow him the labour and perseverance of a whole life-time; not to fill his church any how, but to fill this church out of that district. We should give him the charge over head of one and all of its families, and tell him that, instead of seeking

hearts from without, he should so shape and regulate his movements, that, as far as possible, his church-room might all be taken up by hearers from within. It is this peculiar relation between his church and its contiguous householders, all placed within certain geographical limits, that distinguishes him from the others as a territorial minister. And let the whole country be paralleled out into such districts and parishes, with an endowed clergyman so assigned to each, and each small enough to be overtaken by the attentions of one clergyman—we should thus as far as its machinery is concerned, have the perfect example of a territorial Establishment." (pp. 142, 143.)

He then goes on to say, that in such sections every minister should apply himself to courteous domestic instruction; and he takes great pains to assure us of the civility with which such kindly visitations will be received—a fact which, he thinks, so far as relates to England at least, was *discovered* by himself, in the year 1822, when (as he minutely informs us) he made "a small household survey, in the worst part of the parish of St. Giles's in London, in company with Mr. Joseph Butterworth, who then lived in Russell Square." Let no one despise these details. Great discoveries should always be recorded with full particulars.

Gravely, however, we admit the undoubted facility, and the vast importance of the kindly visitation which the Dr. has so well described. We concur with him entirely in his estimate of the effects which may be anticipated from it. But we marvel much how he argues from these grounds, to either the necessity, or the expediency, of territorial religious allotments by the state. These are clearly *unnecessary* for the end designed. Religious teachers can certainly "make a tender" of their counsels at every house, without being either appointed or paid by the state, and with every probability of being as well received. And it wants nothing but to act upon a plan, and to act in concert, for unendowed and unappointed ministers to secure the actual visitation of every family that will permit it. The territorial machinery is therefore altogether needless; and this consideration alone ought to be sufficient to set it aside. But

besides being needless, it is also mischievous; and a brief survey of the evils which it both naturally and necessarily involves will serve to set in a fairer light those voluntary efforts which Dr. Chalmers evidently wishes altogether to supersede.

1. State allotments of the population to religious instructors involve the exercise of an authority quite inadmissible. A minister thus placed in a parish, appears before the people in the name and behalf of the government who send him, and *as a teacher* is armed with the authority of the state. He will naturally speak of himself as an authorized teacher, and as authorized to teach them, his parishioners. His authority to teach implies, of course, their duty, and their duty as originating from civil governors, to submit to his teaching; and the absence of any right or authority on their part to refuse or question his instructions. He comes with "the faith selected for them" by the government; to dictate their religion, therefore, and practically to deny and take away the right of private judgment in relation to it. All this is wrong—essentially and heinously wrong—and cannot be tolerated for a moment. We acknowledge that a teacher of religion *may* possess authority; but when we meet with one who makes such a pretension, we ask him, in the words which were once most justly addressed to the teacher sent from God, "Who gave thee this authority?" If he says, and proves his words, that Jesus Christ has given him authority, I own his credentials; but if he presents me with an Act of Parliament, to show authority derived from the state, I tear his parchment, and repudiate at once both the sender and the sent, with a rebuke by which presumption not very dissimilar was long ago effectually abashed—"Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but *who are ye?*"

2. Such a method obstructs the salutary exercise of the mind. Above all subjects, religion calls for a vigorous exercise of the rational powers. Its appeal

is to the understanding, that it may reach the conscience and the heart. It requires every man to think, feel, and act for himself. The state-allotment of authorised teachers directly diminishes the force of this appeal, and tends to make it altogether nugatory. Instead of being thrown upon the determination of your own religious views and character, here is "a faith" and mode of piety selected for you by the government—determined to be right, therefore, before you can ask a single question about it—and a minister sent down by the government expressly to take charge of your religion, according to this method, and do it for you. You have, consequently, neither to inquire, nor to choose, nor to think; but to yield yourself to the hands of the parish priest, and keep to the ways of your parish church—then you are told, all will be well. What a fearful opiate to the heart is this! What multitudes must live and die—have lived and died—in slumber, under such a system!

3. The territorial state-clergy scheme brings into operation a class of inferior and unworthy motives. Under it, people are not left to the influences of truth and consideration, to entertain one or the other view, as such influences may be cherished or repelled by them; but motives of secular interest are introduced. A bounty is offered on adhesion to the national religion, both as opposed to no religion at all, and to such other forms of religion as may co-exist with it. If you belong to "the church," you are looked on complacently by all the state authorities; your trade is unobstructed; your reputation is untarnished; you are eligible to offices of honour and emolument, and admissible to charities and alms-houses. But will all these things be, if you are a Dissenter? O no! The very reverse, as has often been keenly felt. So that here is a set of worldly motives employed to induce people to be religious, and to be of one religion rather than another—or rather, to induce people to profess this religion,

whether they understand and approve it, or not. Truth, and true religion, scorn such an appeal. It is a mere bounty on falsehood and hypocrisy.

4. This method, further, is unjust to Christians of other denominations. The secular benefits attached to the professors of the established sect, are of course withheld from those of all sects besides. Christians of every other denomination, have to bear odium and embarrassment in a thousand forms; and this not because they are wanting in virtue—for, compared with churchmen in the mass, they are by far the most virtuous part of the community—but simply because they are Dissenters. They pay a civil penalty for their religious convictions; and are punished for their fear of God, and their reverence of truth. This is substantial persecution, and does not differ in principle from persecution in its bloodiest forms. An Established church is essentially a persecuting church. If I were to invest these institutions with personal attributes, I might say that they have a native thirst for blood; and that the only security for religious liberty lies in their being muzzled with iron. When they cannot bite, their growl is still heard, in the Acts of Parliament which call our liberty, mangled as it is, *toleration*.

Dr. Chalmers, overlooking the injustice thus done by an Establishment to all other communities of Christians, has dwelt largely on that which he conceives to be done to their *ministers*. He says it is "puzzling to assign

"any ground on which they should be excluded, we do not say from the honours, but from the substantial benefits of an Establishment; or why a national provision should be withheld from the ministers of those Protestant denominations, more than from the Protestant Episcopalians of England. It may be easy to say," he adds, "why we should keep out Popery, and let in Protestantism; but it does not appear easy to fix on the proper reason, why, when there is so little to discriminate between them, we should let in one species of Protestantism, and keep out all the rest. The closer their modes of faith approximate to each other, it does—it may well be thought—aggravate the task of selection, and make it all the harder to specify, why it is that the monopoly of the endowments of a great national institute should have been vested in one alone; or why its favoured disciples should have been admitted into the bowers of the Establishment, while all the rest have been left on the outfields of unendowed sectarianism." (pp. 133, 134.)

We thank our brother in "the bowers," for his sympathy; but we must apprise him that his whole argument, in relation to this matter, proceeds on an erroneous basis.

He argues as though he conceived that

"the honours and emoluments of an Establishment" were the wish of *all* Christian communities. We know not respecting whom he may be in the right, in this supposition; but for ourselves, we can most truly assure him that he is in the wrong. Difficult as it may be for those who luxuriate in "the bowers of an Establishment" to believe it, it is nevertheless true that we do not covet, and that we are convinced we ought not to share, their supposed advantages. We therefore want no apology for the state-church not comprehending ourselves. Were a participation of its wealth and power to be offered us, our reply ought to be, in the words of an ancient seer, "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another."

But, if we did wish to share "the honours and emoluments of an Establishment," we confess we should be hardly persuaded by the arguments of Dr. Chalmers on this subject to forego our desire. On the question of *right* he makes no stand, but admits that the churches established in England and Scotland have no claim to be preferred over the great majority of Protestant sects. Only, says he, the endowed church *must* be "territorial," and if "territorial," then only one sect can be endowed. Whence he pleads with all other sects to let the one which happens to be endowed possess her supremacy undisturbed, because there is a great work to be done, which can be done by no other means. Nay, he goes further, and not only complains of sectaries, who, on account of minor differences, will not help an Establishment in its office, but laughs at those who, for what he calls "paltry" and "whimsical" peculiarities, refuse to enter the enclosure and enjoy the "bowers." "To the remonstrances of the excluded sects, why, when we differ so little, do you not take us in?" he tells us, "it may well be replied, why, when you differ so little, do you keep yourselves out?" (p. 175.)

Now if I were a party against whom these arguments had any bearing, I should reply in two ways. I should say, first, that I do not regard the Establishment as adapted to the work it boasts of; that I look on it rather as an institution essentially ill-principled, and actually ill-working; so that no motive exists with me to sacrifice anything to its support. And, I should say, secondly, that the points in which I differ with the Established sect,

though not "essential," are not "paltry;" if subordinate to the great matters of saving truth, they are not (as Dr. Chalmers calls them) "caprices, and whimsical peculiarities," but matters upon which I think God has made known his will, and upon which I have made a conscientious decision. To be asked with a sneer,* why, for such reasons, I "keep myself out" of "the bowers of an Establishment," is but to be asked, in other words, why I am such a fool as not to sell my conscience for a bribe? Is it the habit, then, of those who enter Establishments to do so? Or can he be anything but a knave, who asks me such a question?

5. But to return. The allotment of territorial rights to state-clergy can evidently be of no use, without a guarantee of their competency and diligence. This we have already seen that an Establishment cannot afford. On the contrary, it is adapted to create, and creates in fact, a ministry pre-eminently ignorant and unfaithful. To hand over sections of the country and masses of the people to these teachers, is to consign the people to ruin, and to augment, to the utmost possible degree, the mischievous influence of the ministers. They are the very men to whom a territory should not be assigned; but who should be left to the clear sense and shrewd observation of the people themselves, to be dealt with according to their deserts.

6. The state-church system, also, places its ministers in a position of serious and insuperable disadvantage. They are placed over their parishioners to fleece as well as to feed them, and appear before the people as having an obvious interest in the system they uphold. It is the source of "honour and emolument" to them; and even if they are disinterested in labour, and abundant in self-denials, it is scarcely possible they should be exempt from suspicion of selfishness in the popular mind. They are entitled to exact money for every thing; money for christening you—mo-

ney for marrying you—money for churching you—money for burying you; and all this out of your own pocket, besides the much larger sum which the state pays them for the trouble of taking it from you. It may be said *unjustly* that they strive to maintain the church as a system of "good things," and religion as "a profitable fable;" that they preach only because they are paid for it, and that they look out, with an eagle's eye, for promotion—all this may be said unjustly; but it is said and will be said, and cannot be gainsaid, so long as Establishments exist. The work of the Gospel is thus rendered, not voluntary, but professional; not self-denying but lucrative; and, with so rich a fleece for his reward, the shepherd never can make the people believe, that he cares mainly for the flock. 'We say that this is a serious disadvantage, both to minister and to people; inasmuch as it takes away from him that aspect of disinterested love, by which, above all other things, he might win his way into their hearts.

These natural and inevitable mischiefs are serious drawbacks from the apparent value of the territorial system; and fully entitle us to claim a preference for modes of exertion independent of such machinery. But, even if the scheme were not mischievous, but were, on the contrary, of confessedly beneficial adaptation, we might truly say that it is impracticable, at least, without a simultaneous requirement, that every person shall go to *his parish church*. Dr. Chalmers seems to be displeased with ministers who "fill their churches by the superior attractiveness of their preaching," and would have them do so "out of the district" allotted to them. For ministers to *try* at this is very well; but does Dr. Chalmers mean to put a restraint upon the *people*; so that either the residents in other parishes shall not come into this, or the residents in this parish shall not stray into another? Why, to say nothing of that awkward tribe the Dissenters, even churchmen themselves would never bear such a bridle as this. No part of the community is more characterised by "having itching ears," than the church-going population, or more audaciously wander in search of popular preachers. Let Dr. Chalmers mark out the country into territorial allotments, stud the land with state-clergy, to the number of one to every two thousand persons, and assign the Christian instruction of each section to its au-

* I was present when this appeal was made, and was struck, too forcibly soon to forget it, with the kind of plaudits with which it was received. I have used too gentle a term in saying they were expressive of a *sneer*; it was almost a broad laugh. An ebullition more indicative of an utter want of principle in those from whom it issued, and of an absolute incapacity to appreciate it in those against whom it was directed, I never witnessed—one less creditable to the honesty of that courtly audience as churchmen, or their urbanity as gentlemen.

thorised minister—and the people will still forsake their authorised instructors in countless droves, and with unblushing effrontery, to fill the churches of Mr. Melvill and Dr. Dillon, leaving others to the occupation of the sexton and the beadle. Now we affirm, that, in this way, even churchmen themselves, and the highest of them, adopt and act out the plan often so vehemently condemned by high church writers, of *the hearers choosing their own minister*; and that they trample in the dust the fancy of territorial allotments. According to the theory of an Establishment, every man should go to his parish church; for there preaches the man, and the *only* man, whom the state has authorised to teach *him*; and it is as clear a violation of his duty, and as gross an insult to the state, to go to church in another parish, as it could be to worship in a conventicle. Originally the church of England enforced this theory, by a law imposing a penalty upon every person who did not go to his parish church; and there is no sense at all in Dr. Chalmers's scheme of a minute territorial allotment, without the odious and intolerable adjunct of its revival.

Such are our objections to the localizing of Christian ministers *by the authority of the state*. We say, let them localize; but let localizing, like contribution, be *voluntary*.

On no other ground does our northern opponent make an attack upon us. If we have repulsed him at these points, we have repulsed him at all those at which he has thought proper to try our mettle. And we remain unscathed in our position. The principle of "free trade," which he falsely ascribes to us, we disclaim. The principle of voluntary contribution, which we acknowledge, he admits to be just. And the territorial scheme, which he pronounces to be indispensable, we have shown to be needless, mischievous, and impracticable. It remains, then, a sentiment impregnable thus far, that voluntary efforts as they constitute the only just, are a perfectly sufficient mode of diffusing Christianity. We will not argue their sufficiency, however, merely from the failure of the Chalmerian battery; but will add two or three considerations of a positive kind, to confirm our conclusion.

1. The sufficiency of voluntary efforts for the spread of the Gospel may be argued from *their exclusive rectitude*. They are

the only kind of efforts which are not unjust. Now, if these be not sufficient, one of two things must ensue; either that there are no sufficient means of accomplishing the triumph of Christianity, or that its triumph must be secured by injustice and wrong. We allow our opponents to choose either horn of this dilemma. But, if neither of them can be accepted; then our position cannot be shaken, that voluntary efforts, seeing they are the only ones which are just, must be sufficient for the propagation of religion.

2. The same conclusion may be argued from *the confidence placed in voluntary efforts by the Divine Founder of Christianity*. He neither enjoined, recommended, nor sanctioned, any other. He committed "the faith" "to the saints," and left all its triumphs to their fidelity and zeal. And this, too, in the extremest weakness of his cause; at a period, when, if ever, it must have pre-eminently demanded the sheltering and fostering care of governing powers. How was it our Lord did not see, that his Gospel could by no means so effectually be propagated through the world, as by making the Roman Emperors successively the head of his church, and directing them to carve the empire into parishes, and endow a teacher "to every two thousand of the population," out of the imperial revenues? What could he be thinking of, to entrust such a work to a few poor fishermen, without a single endowment for a rector, vicar, or curate among them—or a single cathedral preferment, to provide leisure for "pious authorship;" and without any "territorial allotment," except when their feet "were made fast in the stocks," or their hands bound behind them to die? Was this *infatuation*? One would think Dr. Chalmers must deem it so. We hold it to be *wisdom*; and avow the methods in which our adorable Master placed his confidence, to be worthy of ours.

3. The sufficiency of voluntary efforts may be argued from *their comprehending all that is active and powerful in Establishments themselves*. Every body who looks at our national religious Establishment in its actual working, must be struck with the fact, that is far from working out the theory of its existence. According to this, the care of the nation's religion belongs to the government, which is to endow the teachers, erect the churches, divide the parishes, appoint the incumbents,

and constitute the entire hierarchy, with all its grades of rank and authority, "selecting its faith," and enacting its ritual. Theoretically, there is neither scope to voluntary zeal, nor right of private judgment. From first to last, it is a scheme of coercion and restriction; every man's work and duty being precisely laid down and prescribed to him, by the government. This is the theory of a national church; but we all know, that, with respect to our own, at least, (and I might enumerate others,) this is not the practice. There has been gradually introduced into it a great deal of what Dr. Chalmers calls "voluntaryism." See it in the Church Missionary Society, in the Bishop of London's subscription for building churches, (analogous to that of which Dr. Chalmers boasts so loudly in Scotland); in the erection of churches by individual liberality, the election of lecturers and other officiating ministers by the people, in the Pastoral Aid Society, and many instances besides. The same spirit was struggling for utterance in the baffled Home Missionary Society of the Irish Church. All these things are exercises of the voluntary principle, as distinct from, and as repugnant to, the principles and spirit of an Establishment. These doings are copied from us. But these are the very life and power of the Establishment at the present moment. It would perish, in the present state of public opinion, if they were obstructed; and it lives only because it has been plastic enough to admit of such irregularities, and to yield to such anomalous modifications. How can churchmen deprecate that which they so sedulously cultivate, and which constitutes at once the entire vitality of their system, and the sole hope of its stability?

4. The sufficiency of voluntary efforts may be further argued from *their early triumphs*. For national Establishments were not co-eval with Christianity. This fallacious aid was never presented to it, till the time of Constantine, who became Emperor of Rome, A.D. 330. For more than three hundred years, therefore, this heaven-born religion struggled alone; and in its native might and majestic simplicity, it achieved triumphs far greater than have at any subsequent period distinguished its course. If that was the time of its helplessness, give us its helplessness again, and set the quickening spirit once more free from the "machinery" and the trap-

pings, which only disguise her loveliness and fetter her hands.

Dr. Chalmers, however, tells us that voluntary efforts cannot be trusted. Whatever they may have done in ancient days, in modern times they have egregiously failed. These are his words.

"Ere, however, we confide the religion of our people to the growth and multiplication of these churches, we should like to know in how far they have filled up those blank spaces, which, in the course of an increasing population, our national churches have left behind them. In the deficiency of our existing apparatus, the voluntary principle has had ample field for the trial of its energies; and our desire is to understand, whether in virtue of those spontaneous and expansive properties which have been ascribed to it, the mighty surplus of our unprovided millions has indeed been overtaken. In this land of perfect toleration, there has been no want of liberty for the great experiment; and now, at the end of at least a century, since chapels may, without let or hindrance, have been planted in each vacant portion of the territory, let us be told whether all the national and all the voluntary churches together be commensurate to the exigencies of our augmented population." (p. 80.)

This passage exhibits very strikingly one of the effects of people getting into "the bowers of an Establishment." These "bowers" seem to be places where studious men, like poets, live in a world of their own imaginings, and remain almost utterly ignorant of what exists in the real world around them. If this had not been the case with Dr. Chalmers, it is utterly inconceivable how he should have stated, that "in this land of perfect toleration (!) there has been no want of liberty for the great experiment" of voluntary zeal; and that, for "at least a century" past, "chapels may without let or hindrance, have been planted in each vacant portion of the territory." The reverse of this is notorious, and the bruit of it has been loud enough, one would have supposed, to penetrate everywhere—but it seems the northern monasteries must be excepted. For "*a century*" past! Does Dr. Chalmers, then, know nothing of the times of Whitfield and of Wesley? But I forbear, lest I should be severe. Every body else knows, that the "planting" of chapels has been throughout the whole period, and is to this day, obstructed by the strenuous employment of all possible influences, just and unjust. In this respect the voluntary principle has never had a fair trial in England.

Nor has it had a fair trial in any other respect. And it is preposterous to talk of its having a fair trial, where there exists a national church. The operation of the voluntary principle is thus at once dis-

countenanced and embarrassed; its scope is contracted; its resources are drained away; its spirit is broken. It is like private traders contending with a monopoly. And here, after centuries of patient, though disadvantageous toil, resulting, of course, in only partial success, we have the great monopolist triumphantly and tauntingly saying, "You have had ample trial, and you had better give it up; you see it won't do." We say, *Break up the monopoly*, and let us try *then*. And never, till such a trial has been made, can any man undertake to affirm rationally, that the voluntary system would not be a speedy and everlasting blessing to his country and to the world.

Considering the difficulties under which it has laboured, every candid person will allow that the voluntary principle has done much. It has done enough to vindicate its character, and to demonstrate its capabilities. I am not here to boast of its achievements; I say rather, that it should have done more, and that it should yet do more. It is this very thing that the controversy we are engaged in should teach us, namely, *to act out our principles*.—It is well to defend them, but it is better to work upon them. We see the vehemence with which they are assailed, and the urgency with which the extension of national churches is pushed on; and it is not amiss to meet argument with argument. But it will be still better to meet arguments with facts. An eloquent defence of the voluntary principle may do something for us; but the manifest diffusion of the Gospel around us will do much more. Nothing will carry such irresistible conviction that it *can* do good, as the demonstration that it *is* doing good. And it is not as a theoretical, but as an active principle alone, that it can live. We may as well abandon our cause at once, as be idle. It is the diligent who will be substantially in the right, in this controversy. And the churchman, with all his advocacy of the principle of authority, is practically working, to a great extent, the principle of voluntary labour. Let us not fall behind him. Let every man be at work as best he may; and whatever may be the fate of national churches, the time shall yet come, when we "shall no longer say every man to his neighbour, know the Lord; for all shall know him, from the least unto the greatest."

In thus noticing the lectures of Dr.

Chalmers, I have endeavoured to find the strength of his argument, and to grapple with it fairly; those who may have heard or read them, will be able to say with how much honesty or effect. If, however, there was little force in his reasonings, there certainly was great staunchness in his courage; and he deserves no little honour for having spoken his sentiments boldly, where he must have been sure some of them could not be acceptable—as in the following passage.

"We do not speak of the sin of schism in the abstract. There is much said on this subject by certain domineering churchmen, who arrogate a mystic superiority to themselves, while they would consign all others beyond the pale of Christianity—where-with we cannot in the least sympathise. It is not on any pretension of this sort, that we would vindicate the Establishment of the churches, either of Scotland or of England. We do not feel it necessary for such a purpose, to depress immeasurably beneath us, either the creed or the government of other denominations. We most willingly concede of sectaries we could name, that they are one with us in all which is vital, and only differ from us in certain minute and insignificant peculiarities; and yet the Establishment, the single, the exclusive Establishment, of our existing churches in their respective countries, might be made to rest, we think, on a firmer because a more rational basis—on a far clearer principle than is alleged by those, who claim for their ministers the immaculate descent of a pure and apostolic ordination. We disclaim all aid from any such factitious argument—an argument which could have been of no avail against the Popery that we rejected, and should be of as little avail against those denominations of Protestantism which have been left unendowed." (pp. 172, 173.)

Whether the obtaining of this rebuke for the high churchmen was exactly contemplated by the "Christian Influence Society," I know not; nor whether this is exactly the commodity for which they are satisfied to have given this northern hunter after treasury grants, the gratifying sum (if report may be credited) of three hundred guineas. But let them not be chagrined. So salutary an article is not dear at that price. If they will take it kindly, and make a good use of it, it may be worth to them in the end, a great deal more than they have unintentionally paid for it.

2

THE
“PROGRESS OF DISSENT;”

CONTAINING
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
REMARKABLE AND AMUSING PASSAGES
OF
THAT ARTICLE,
IN THE SIXTY-FIRST NUMBER
OF THE
QUARTERLY REVIEW;
ADDRESSED TO
THE EDITOR.

BY A NONCONFORMIST.

To be serious with a trifle, is to crush a moth with a mallet,—you have
only to raise your finger, and the frail creature dies. PURITAN.


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TO THE EDITOR.



MY GOOD SIR;

As I am about to remark on a work over which you preside, I consider myself obliged, in common courtesy, to address myself to you. And, in doing so, I am desirous of conciliating your attention, by assuring you, according to established practice in a correspondence with editorial personages, that I am one of "your constant readers and admirers." Indeed, the publication of the "Quarterly," and the "Edinburgh," (pardon the wicked conjunction,) is rather a considerable event to my family; and they are seldom allowed to tarry long in the house without our making their principal contents our own. Your last number,

therefore, had no sooner arrived, than I arranged for an open evening; and, taking my place in the domestic circle around the exhilarating fire-hearth, I prepared myself for—I would say, if the quotation were not worn thread-bare,—

“The feast of reason, and the flow of soul.”

It must be admitted, Mr. Editor, your articles, in the present number, are allowed to lose nothing for the want of being well ticketed. I could not avoid imagining, that you had taken a hint from Mr. Rennell’s “homely” observations about the “cheap shops” of Dissenters; and, improving even from the example of your enemies, had determined to defend yourself by the vulgarism of catching titles, and puffing announcements. There is “*Memoirs of Scott and Newton.*” An excellent *running line* this! Every body would be anxious to know what the Reviewers of the “Quarterly” could say of Scott and Newton, as all the world was curious to know what Southey had to do with Wesley and the Methodists. I expected, of course, no agreement of opinion, yet I did expect some manly discussion, and philosophical argument; but, no,—the subject was slurred; the lives of these eminent men were scarcely more noticed

than if they had never lived ; there was evidently too much cowardice to recognize them either as friends or foes. I was deceived by the advertising title.

Then there is "*Biddulph,—Operation of the Holy Spirit.*" Certainly a very catching announcement in such a place ; but it is nothing less than a trick on the reader, for there is no agreement between the treatise and the title. The difficult and important question of divine influence, so far from being canvassed with energy and fairness, is not even mooted ; and the seducing advertisement at the head of the page, is only meant to make us the unwilling witnesses of a rude attack on an individual, who has spent his life honourably and usefully in the service of your church, and who is now too feeble to arise in his own defence. He is going down to the grave, and you kick him as he goes. Really, Mr. Editor, this is not quite brotherly.

Then came, last, though not least, "*New Churches,—Progress of Dissent.*" Now, Sir, with all my regard for the "Quarterly," I am unhappily a dissentient from the endowed church of my country ; and you may therefore readily suppose, that of all other interesting titles, this was, to me, by far the most *piquante* and ensnaring. I at once concluded,

if not edified, I should be amused; and I will do you the justice to say, that in this conclusion I have not been disappointed. And since it happens, that I am one of those many persons, who, as they are disposed to bury their griefs in their own bosoms, lest they should grieve others, so do not find their sensations of pleasure perfected unless they are participated, I shall make you, Mr. Editor, my *confidante*; and, as the person next interested to myself, shall hope, by explaining the sources of my amusement, to contribute, in some measure, to your gratification.

My first amusements were decidedly those of the imagination. The title was so craftily put, that it awakened, but did not gratify, curiosity; and I instantly found my mind busied in inquiry.—“New churches,” thought I, “what will they say on this? Will they acknowledge the liberal way in which the Dissenters met the measure?—Hardly. Will they maintain that monies so appropriated have been applied with a wise economy?—Hardly. Are they then preparing the public mind for another gratuity?—Perhaps so. Then the “Progress of Dissent,” what will they do with this? Will they make a bold venture, (for nothing is more venturesome or timid as the case may be than the “Quarterly”) roundly to

deny its progress? Or will they make it a debateable question, and suspend it in profitable doubt? Or will they at once concede the point, as no longer tenable, and make the best of their retreat?—I cannot tell,—we shall see.”

The wanderings of my fancy were checked by the reading voice of our little circle, which had already pronounced to us some of your preliminary observations. The Church Report was every way “highly gratifying,” *except that more munificent grants were wanting*. And as to the progress of Dissent, the concession was made without a quibble, in our favour; and, evidently, with the greater readiness, to awaken fear and diligence in *certain high places*, that subsequent petitions, in favour of a languishing and exposed church, might find proper entertainment. Well, Mr. Editor, your concession, use it as you may, has put me in such excellent humour, that I am half disposed to promise your prayers my best support, though they should be repeated till “the day of doom.” At such a time the importance of the admission is, in my esteem, very great; and, rightly to conceive of it, we must look, not at the isolated fact, but at all the collateral circumstances. Had the nation been retrograde in knowledge, and liberty, and piety, while Dissent was advancing

over the land, I should, I confess, have become exceedingly jealous of its principles; but, now, when science has corrected and enlarged the map of knowledge,—when art is clothing itself with the simplicity and the grandeur of nature,—when valour has subdued the leagued demons of anarchy and despotism, and is reposing at the feet of wisdom,—when liberty has made herself more fully understood, and is more extensively beloved,—when religion silently rejoices at the expansion of her dominion over the consciences and hearts of men,—when the country is really effecting the march of ages in the compass of years;—then to be told, that Dissent is making a simultaneous progress, is virtually to be told, that her path is illuminated by truth, and that she is borne on her way by the calm, but irresistible, force of evidence!

But we will return to the text. No sooner was the admission fairly made, than I became curious to ascertain how your Reviewer would sustain himself; for I have a particular interest in the movements of the mind under reverses and concessions; and from the days of Xenophon, downward, it has been justly considered more difficult to effect a retreat, than to win a battle. I quickly perceived the critic

was not quite to my taste. There was too much whining lamentation,—too many garrulous professions of truth, principle, and charity,—apparently meant to disguise a spirit of mean and angry retort. Now, Sir, I have a deep sympathy with a spirit, which, in adversity, carries itself with gentleness and generosity, and think with the heathen, it is a sight the gods, if gods there were, might look upon; but, let it become loquacious, noisy, and vindictive, and it is very possible it may render itself either contemptible or ludicrous. However, be the issue what it may, I think we shall escape disappointment. Should the Reviewer improve as we advance, we will admire him; and should even the reverse be realized, we shall find proportionate amusement.

Let us enter then, at once, with him on the subject. We find him seeking comfort under the confession extorted from him, by the consideration, that, though Dissent has increased, it is a very different thing from what it was. It is a curious paragraph.

“Of the three denominations of Dissenters, a few, and but a few, of the old Presbyterians exist; still fewer preserve their original Calvinism, and rigid discipline. It is not easy to discern the modern Independents from those Methodists who have formed recent establishments on similar principles. The Quakers are stationary. The great

accession to the body of Dissenters has been among (from) the followers of Whitfield and Wesley. But in all the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapels, where the Calvinistic disciples of the former meet, a close approximation is made to the services of the Church of England; while an attempt to establish the Liturgy, as the standing service amongst the Wesleyans, at a Conference in the North, was rejected by no great majority."

All this is very consolatory. What a strange compound the comforts of some people are, Mr. Editor! The old Presbyterians are dead,—that is a comfort. If any remain, they are degenerated to Arians and Socinians,—that is a comfort. The Quakers, unhappy wights, cease to quake, and are "stationary,"—that is comfortable. The modern Independents are just like the Methodists; and the Methodists are just like the Church,—that is comfortable. But, after all, Sir, the whole, Presbyterians Baptists Independents Quakers and Methodists, are Dissenters; and Dissent is increasing—rapidly increasing,—very comfortable, no doubt!

Notwithstanding the restorative powers of this elixir, the Reviewer continues to labour under great prostration of spirits, and I almost fear, as is not unfrequently the case, attended by slight incoherency of mind. This is the style of his lamentations:—

“ We consider, then, the Clergy as trammelled and impeded in their labour by many difficulties from which they cannot by any activity or zeal emancipate themselves ; and the Dissenters, as possessing certain advantages, which the situation, the character, and the necessary habits of the Clergy, as well as the peculiarity of the Church Establishment, render unattainable by its ministers.”—page 231.

This is passing strange ! What, Sir, is it to be said of the Clergy, the high aristocratic Clergy of this land, who are nourished by the richest emoluments, and guarded by exclusive privileges, whose graduated dignities reach from the cottage to the throne, and powerfully influence whatever they touch, that they are “impeded,” “trammelled,” enslaved,—and so enslaved, that their utmost “activity and zeal cannot emancipate themselves ?” And in the same breath is it to be said, that the Dissenters, unpatronized and unknown, and, if known, known only to be misrepresented, and “every where spoken against,” are comparatively free, are possessors of themselves, and of the best means of benefiting others ? Well, the Reviewer may, perhaps, be able to assist our convictions on this subject. It may be possibly in his power to show, that the Dissenting Church, for which the nation has done nothing, has been taught to help herself ; and that the endowed Church, for which the

nation has done every thing, has reason to complain, like the eastern princess, that she is really trammelled and enfettered by the number and weight of her splendid decorations. But we must follow him to his proof. He begins :—

“ Without question, then, the first and greatest cause of the diminished influence of the Clergy, and of accession to the Dissenters, has been the enormous increase of local population. Towns of a moderate size have extended themselves into vast cities, new towns have sprung up on wild heaths, and barren moors, with the rapidity, and under the same agency, as that building which is said in *Paradise Lost*, to have ‘risen like an exhalation.’ All this extraordinary change has taken place, for the most part, in districts, which, at the time of the establishment of our Church, or rather, when it adopted the parochial divisions, and took possession of the existing religious edifices at the Reformation, were then thinly occupied by a scattered agricultural population. In the towns, the old capacious church afforded tolerable accommodation to the parishioners, who were not yet pampered into fastidiousness, by the luxuries of well lined pews and cushions, but were contented to offer up their devotions from a bare bench, or an uninclosed seat in the aisle. In our older cities, and the more ancient parts of the metropolis, towers and spires, and, perhaps, the old massy cathedral, indicated, from a distance, that due provision was made for the worship of God, in proportion to the number of buildings for the use and convenience of man. Nothing is more striking than the absence of the stately tower, and the spire, whose ‘silent finger points to heaven;’ when we

look down on these new towns with their wide unbroken uniformity of flat roofs and heavy parapets; or in the western part of London, which displays more strongly the deficiency of which we complain, by the contrast which the City, crowded with churches of every height, and every description of architecture, perpetually affords. It is evident, that the Clergy had not the power to supply the increasing demands for increased accommodation,—thus multiplying in all quarters.”

The first cause then assigned for the progress of Dissent, and the diminution of the Church, is the enormous increase of local population; and this the Reviewer requires us to take “without question.” Nevertheless, Mr. Editor, I have a *few* questions to propound before I can embrace this amusing proposition. I desire then, 1. To ask, What affinity there can possibly be between *empty* churches, and an *increasing* population? I can readily conceive, if a town or city were gradually depopulated, that the church would suffer a reduction in its numbers; but, when your Reviewer argues, that the population has increased, and therefore the church has diminished, I must beg leave to decline his inference. 2. I would inquire, if the increase of population was really against the Clergyman, how could it be in favour of the Dissenter? Surely this is very paradoxical! If the

growing numbers of the people widened the field of labour to the Dissenter, could it by the same circumstance be narrowed to the Churchman?

But "towns," you say, "sprang up like an exhalation, in districts which were thinly occupied by a scattered agricultural population." And if this was the case, had not the Church every advantage against Dissent? Were not her ten thousand ministers already planted over the face of the land, to take the full benefit of these occurrences? Whatever changes might happen, could a town arise, or even an individual be born, in any spot not previously brought within the well-defined limits of some parish? Had not that parish its priest? And was not the priest then in a state of local preparation to observe the growing wants of his charge, while as yet Dissent and Dissenters were not perhaps known to his borders?

Yet, your Reviewer continues, whatever the priest might have done, *church-room* would be wanting. But will your Reviewer inform me, if this was to the disadvantage of the Church, how it could be to the advantage of Dissent? The Dissenter was poor and feeble, and had the tide of general opinion against him; the Church was wealthy, had a

powerful representation in the Court, the Cabinet, and the Parliament, and could tax the whole land to effect her object; if both parties were, therefore, seeking to afford advancing accommodation as the people multiplied, it is most obvious where all the facilities must rest. The Dissenter would have to do it alone, and out of his penury; the Churchman from his ample resources of wealth and influence.

The Reviewer is exceedingly unhappy in the example by which he would illustrate his meaning. To convince us at once that accommodation was wanted, and could not be provided, he refers to "the western part of London," in contrast with the City, which "is crowded with churches of every description." Is it then to be said, that the *City* had provided sufficient places for the spiritual instruction of the people, and that *Westminster* could not? That the very spot which contains within its limits, the collective energy and opulence of the kingdom, with nobility in every dwelling, and a mitre in every street, that such a spot, the richest in the world, could not supply itself with the necessary accommodations for the worship of God!

"Without question," Mr. Editor, this is a very amusing way of treating the subject;

but I am so little satisfied with its *correctness*, that I must endeavour to give a new version to the text of the Reviewer. He says, there was a want of accommodation. This I admit. He urges, the Church was not able to supply this deficiency. I say, what the Dissenters have done, the Church could have done, "and much more abundantly." I must refer, therefore, the continuance of the evil, on her part, not to the absence of power, but of *disposition*. Indeed, the Reviewer, in his eagerness to mark the motives of the Dissenters, has unconsciously committed himself to the same opinion. "In the mean time," he says, that is, while the population was increasing, and the Church was indolent, "the Dissenters perceived and seized their advantage." Yes, this is exactly the fact; the Dissenters saw, and the Church did not see. The Dissenters did their best to meet the moral and spiritual wants of the nation on this emergency; the Church was content to do nothing, was blind to the demands of the occasion, and was only moved into constrained effort by her ultimate jealousy of rival exertions. The history of the last twenty years is "attestation strong," in support of this statement. When the Dissenters, and a few pious Clergymen, originated the Bible Society, the Church first

fulminated her wrath, and finding her bolts fell, like the dart of Priam, innoxious to the ground, she betook herself, with better purpose, to the revival of the "Bartlett's Buildings Society," and the formation of a "Prayer Book and Homily Society." When the Dissenters embodied themselves into a "Missionary Society," another slowly followed among the serious Clergy; while the Church, after vain and various resistance, is at last inoculated with the spirit of the times, though the virus has not taken so happily as might be wished, and is sending forth her mitred and unmitred missionaries. When the Dissenters had carried the Lancasterian plans of education over the nation, then the Church formed a "National Society" for the education of the people; and when the system of the Sunday Schools, by far the least exceptionable for the instruction of the poor, had been used so efficaciously by the Dissenters, many of the Clergy sought to avail themselves of it, but wanting gratuitous and suitable teachers, it has generally amounted to a failure. And finally, when the Dissenters were doing their utmost to provide local accommodation for the worship of the people, and had really done more than their friends or foes expected, the Church was awakened by fear from her

slumbers, lifted up her voice in the senate for more, and still more churches; and her only surprise has been to find, that her application was deemed so reasonable in its nature, and so late in its arrival.

However serious my detail may appear, Mr. Editor, the inference I derive from it, I doubt not, will divert you. It is, that Dissent is necessary to the Church. That they are two elements making one existence,—that the erratic and pungent spirit of nonconformity acts like the galvanic shock on the plethoric habits of the mother church, keeps her among living things, and renders her in advanced age verdant and fruitful;—that, without Dissenters, we should have had no National Schools, no Episcopal Missionaries, no new churches, and consequently, that we Dissenters are the great, original benefactors of the land.

Aspersions follow merit, as the shade the substance. It is, I imagine, on this principle, that your Reviewer has indulged us with the passage I now quote.

“ Many, we have not the slightest doubt, were animated in this cause by the purest and most disinterested motives, the providing spiritual instruction for the poor and ignorant, the bringing home the principles of the gospel, as it were,

to the doors of those who were either at too great a distance from their parish churches, or who could obtain no accommodation there. Many were actuated by the less exalted principles of zeal for their sect or party. Many, we speak from conviction, and therefore will not disguise the truth, from the spirit of commercial speculation, as finding the building of chapels more lucrative than that of building houses; while, in a still larger proportion, the better and baser motives were so mingled and identified, that certainly no outward observer, and scarcely the conscience within, could discriminate the comparative force with which the love of God and the love of wealth operated; or in what degree their combined influence governed the conduct."

Thus it is, that in conceding the fact, that the Dissenters had exerted themselves to make room for a growing population, he consoles himself by branding their motives. Yet here there is something to gratify us. "Many were animated by the purest motives." This is much to say, when we consider who says it. But many were actuated by the principles of zeal for sect and party; this too, whatever we might have to advance against its truth, is very naturally said by the Reviewer; since the human mind cannot judge the principles of other men's conduct, except by the principles which regulate its own. Then finally and chiefly, "many were actuated by a spirit of commercial speculation." Strange assumption

this for the Reviewer to make! and I can only account for its arising so spontaneously to his thoughts, and getting joggled into such a discussion, by supposing that he may have written with a mind under the excitement of some "fearful venture," in the speculating schemes of the day. Perhaps in the "Dairy Company," or the "Steam Washing Company," or the "New Steam Carriage Company,"—or in the "Anglo-Mexican Mine Company,"—or, best of all perhaps, in a little project of his own, a "New Rail Way Company, to facilitate the passage from Albemarle Street to St. James's."

Yet he endeavours to make his statement with professional caution. He tells us he speaks "from conviction," not from knowledge. Really, Mr. Editor, it is not quite fair to make a subject in which others are interested thus intangible. Conviction concerns no one but the person convinced; there are men who may be convinced of any thing; and it may be impossible to affect their convictions. Happily we have not to deal with these convictions, but with the *grounds* on which they depend; and this I judge to be the reason why your Reviewer chooses to talk of his convictions, when he should speak only of facts.

However, for the benefit of more simple folk, it often happens that very cautious persons are too cautious; they travel in a circle to their object, and are in hazard of breaking down before they reach it. The Reviewer not only states conviction, but would dissect motive, and here we find him most amusingly *at fault*. He says, that in a large proportion of these speculatists, better and baser motives were so mingled and identified, that certainly no outward observer, and scarcely the conscience within, could discriminate between them. Then I desire to know, Mr. Editor, if these better and baser motives could not be discriminated by *any outward observer*, nor even by a man's own conscience, how this Reviewer came to discriminate them? Ah, Sir, explanations are awkward things to some people. He should have kept to his *convictions*, then he would have been *safe*.

The reason assigned for this inveterate love of speculation among Dissenters, is, of course, that it affords a high ratio of profit. That "though not actually in the market with Mexican and Columbian Scrip, Tabernacle Bonds are with many as good security, and bear as high a premium as any other medium of exchange;"—that persons who are "possessors of houses,

attach to the rent of them the payment for a pew in the conventicle;”—and that thus “the Clergy have not only to compete with the fair opposition of religious zeal and activity, but with the interested spirit of pecuniary speculation.” All this again the Reviewer requires to be taken as “unquestionable.” Yet I must be permitted, notwithstanding his rooted dislike to questions, to question every part of the declaration, except that, if “Tabernacle Bonds” really exist, they are *good security*,—yes, I hope so. But I deny that there is any system among any branch of Dissenters, that can be fairly referred to “a spirit of pecuniary speculation;” and as to appending the payment for a pew to the rent of a house, I think he must have pleasantly mistaken the practice of his own Church for that of our’s. I have never heard of such a case among the Dissenters; but it is well known to be an ordinary circumstance for the dwelling-house and church-pew to go together; and, in the sale of property, the right to a pew is often made a valuable consideration.

That, in the erection of a new chapel, it seldom happens that the first subscription is equal to all the expenses arising, I readily admit; and in all such cases, the surplus

claims must of necessity be met by a loan. This loan, however, has so few temptations, that it is usually participated, not by the men who are looking shrewdly to their own interest, but by those who are decidedly of the more generous and self-denying character. It is often made without interest; oftener at a reduced interest; never at an exorbitant interest; and generally attended by so liberal a donation towards the liquidation of the debt, as to make the whole transaction one of personal sacrifice. Again, those who are accommodated by the loan, have no idea that its continuance will contribute to their "influence" and prosperity. It is to the interest of the minister, and of the congregation, equally to dispose of pecuniary obligations as quickly as possible. I know many of our churches which have suffered in their numbers and harmony by debt; but I have yet to learn that any have thriven by it.

One word more on this subject. The Reviewer hints at "wealthy persons, master manufacturers, and wholesale tradesmen," as though some instances of this pecuniary speculation were in his eye, and yet he ventures not on giving them. Allow me then to inform you how far particular instances, which have

fallen under my own observation, affect this question. I know of one lay-churchman who holds three chapels as a source of emolument and patronage; I know of no case approaching to it among Dissenters. On the contrary, I know of two lay-dissenters who have, perhaps, made more advances for the accommodation and religious instruction of their fellow-men, than any other two. The one (they need not be named, their works identify them) observed to a friend, "I have spent sixty thousand pounds in the service of God, and through his goodness I have sixty thousand pounds more to spend;" the other has been principal, both by energy and property, in erecting several excellent chapels on the northern line of the Metropolis, and though his modesty will not allow us to know the amount actually sacrificed in these generous efforts, sufficient has necessarily transpired, to assure us, that it is *such a speculation* as the worthy Reviewer would by no means like to have much concern in.

No, Mr. Editor; and though this exposition of the matter was necessary to truth, it is peculiarly an act of self-denial for a Dissenter to make it, and I hope you will think so; for could he conscientiously have allowed the

tempting representations of the Reviewer on the validity, and high premium of Tabernacle Bonds, to have stood, as he solicited “unquestionable,” we might soon have had the prospectus of a “New Chapel Company,” which should take the course with the “New Church Society;” but, since it has become requisite to supply fact for imagination, there cannot be any hope of so good a result, for no Churchman will henceforth venture into the Dissenting money market; and the “Church Society” must run her race alone, and at the end of it, congratulate herself alone, that she has won a noble prize by noble exertion, for which none had striven but herself.

Then the Reviewer, after having tasked his reason so manfully, and put his imagination beneath such restraint, thinks himself at liberty to close this head of grievance, and lighten the burden of discussion by such fine touches of fancy, as bring before us “all things strange and incongruous.” There are *plenty* of “new churches,—the *room* they offer has been *eagerly accepted*,—yet, if they should not be *well attended*, “the friends of the Church must not be dispirited.” To leave the Church is comparatively *so easy*,—to quit the Dissenters is *so difficult*,—that, in the next generation, we may expect the

greater part *to return* to the *original* communion. There is hope *now*,—but, should there be no *present* hope, there is hope for the *future*. The Dissenters are quite *changed*, their principles are “so *relaxed*,”—but there is “a *rigid jealousy*” of separation from themselves, and a *tenacious* hold on new converts. “Probably the difficulty of maintaining their strict *surveillance* over their flocks, may make *against the Dissenters’ influence*,”—“it can *hardly be expected* that the present seceders should *return* to the fold of the Church,”—there is such “*incessant vigilance* to assail all who would abandon them with every denunciation that can enchain weak minds.” Dissent is “a *feud*,” but without “*hostility*.” Dissent is a *disease*,—its “habits are *obstinate* and *inveterate*,”—yet “it is *not* an *inveterate hereditary* malady,” “but a *transitory* disorder.” Verily, Mr. Editor, when well digested, (and it needs to be well ruminated before it can be well digested,) this is one of the most striking perorations to the sub-division of an argument that I have ever perused. I have certainly beheld with astonishment in my younger days, “the sagacious pig” make fine play with the letters of the alphabet, T N S K make King;—but it would be a wicked desecration of the subject to put his skill in

comparison with that of our Reviewer in the use of words and sentences.

Having found some recreation by this pretty excursion of the fancy, the Reviewer gathers up his strength, and advances to another head of argument. It is to show, that the Church has been seriously injured by "the total revolution in the manners of the people, as regards their hours of rising and going to bed." Unhappy Church! to suffer alike from the people whether they are up or a bed! to be seriously affected by the hours at which we choose to breakfast or to dine! Undoubtedly, some inconveniencies are felt in social life, by thrusting the duties of the day into the darkness of night; but that the variations in the hours of refreshment and rest should endanger the Church, is, I acknowledge, a discovery; and it is somewhat akin to the discoveries of earlier days, when Church and King were found in a Christmas pie, and when the poison of Popery lurked beneath the crisped surface of a hot cross-bun.

But, if the Clergy have really suffered as the Reviewer wishes seriously to maintain, I have still to ask, How is the Dissenter benefited? Has any one forbidden the Clergy to adapt their hours of worship to the customs of the people? Have they so preserved

their primitive and simple habits amidst the corrupt fashions of the world, that they are actually "going to bed," when others are going abroad? Are not the twenty-four hours of the day as much at their disposal, as they can possibly be at the disposition of the Dissenters? Happily, the Reviewer contributes something towards delivering us from the labyrinth into which he has brought us. "The Dissenters," he says, "have, with their usual pliability and sagacity, adapted their proceedings" to the changing hours of the people. We thank him for his candour; he will even admit that we have virtues, when he thinks he can make them so equivocal, as to induce a charitable world to consider them rather vices. However, we take the concession as it is given; the man has done his best; and it amounts to something "important." The Dissenters have had "sagacity" to see what was needful, the Clergy have had none; the Dissenter has considered the people, the Clergy have considered themselves; the Dissenters have exercised "pliability" to changes which they could not controul, the Clergy have been unbending and unaccommodating; the Dissenters, like Dr. Southey, (I use his own words, for they are very apposite,) have moved with the sun,

and the Clergy, like Mr. Smith, the heretical member, have stood perversely still, and are left in darkness!

Well, Mr. Editor, I see not how all this is to be helped. The Clergy, by the concessions of their apologist, have chosen to stand firm and unpliant to every change; they have determined in favour of, not merely things, but times and seasons, *as they were*; and, should they still persist, it may possibly happen, that they will be preaching when every body is in bed, and will have their lips and churches closed when every body is waiting to hear; yet it will be their choice, and of their own free election it is hardly consistent or magnanimous to complain. I perceive but one source of consolation for them, and, as the ground is so barren of comfort, my sympathy will not allow me to suppress the mention of it. It is this,—If the Clergy should, in their scorn of “pliability and sagacity,” resolve to resist the wicked spirit of innovation to the uttermost, and to remain stationary while the wheel of fashion is performing its “revolution,” they will, like the dial that “stands still,” be sure of being right *once* in twenty-four hours; and really this is no small comfort when one considers, that it is much more than can be said of many a ticking, chiming, noisy

methodistical time-piece, which is always going, but never right.

There is another head of grievance, of which I shall at once dispose, by connecting it with the subject before us, to which it bears the closest affinity. The Reviewer introduces it briefly, but formally, towards the close of his Essay; his notices of it are scattered over the whole field of his desultory observations. He complains, not only of the hours of worship, but even of the *places* for its accommodation. "The Dissenters," he says, "have great advantage in the strict adaptation of their buildings for the purposes of preaching." Now I am fully aware, that properly to sympathize with the Reviewer's meaning in this sentence, I must read it with a curled lip and sardonic sneer, taking care to lay a peculiar accent on the expressions, *buildings* and *preaching*; yet I am delighted with the admission, which his hostility makes the more important, that these "buildings are *strictly adapted to their purpose*." And although he proceeds to denominate these "buildings" "long brick barns," most "hideous and unsightly" in their exterior, he almost effects an atonement by a second and similar admission, that they are "warm, well-lighted, and commodious within." We have less

reason to be offended at this plain dealing, since the Reviewer cannot grant perfection even to the churches of the land. These churches, which have been the theme of so much indiscriminate praise, whose "spires point silently to heaven," whose "towers indicate a sanctuary to the wretched," with their fretted ceilings and vaulted roofs, their enriched altars and painted windows, their "dim religious light and Cicilian harmony,"—are really very deeply humbled by the confessions he has faithfully recorded. "Beautiful as they are," he says, (and we shall find it rather difficult to connect any idea of the beautiful with his statement of fact,) "beautiful as they are," they are "rambling and irregular," with "aisles, galleries, and chapels, crowded together without plan,"—they are incumbered by "long-drawn aisles and deep recesses," through which the people are widely scattered, and over which the voice of man has feeble controul,—they "are more adapted for processional services than for preaching;" and what little accommodation they might yield, is often withheld, for "a large portion of the area perhaps is secured by inclosure and jealously preserved" for the use of those who are seldom or never there.

Such is the account made out and presented

by the Reviewer. Now, Mr. Editor, let us ascertain whether the balance is for or against us. The Church is large and cold; the Conventicle is snug and warm. The Church is imposing without, but within it is irregular, rambling, and incommodious; the Conventicle has no exterior attraction, but it is adapted to its purpose, and affords the best accommodation. In the Church, the people are more painfully reminded of their inequality than in any other place; in the Conventicle, they are put as much as may be, on a level, as in the presence of Him who is no respecter of persons. In the Church, the preacher speaks with the conviction that he is not heard, and the people listen and cannot understand: while in the Conventicle, "the loud and sonorous voice loses none of its effect," and attention finds its reward. With the Church there is the solitary and mechanical music of the organ; with the Conventicle, there is the animated and "sonorous psalmody" of the entire congregation. What is the conclusion then? Just this,—with *you* there is more pomp; with *us* there is more comfort. And I do not know that a Dissenter need express dissatisfaction at the issue to which the Reviewer has brought us, since John Bull must cease to be John Bull, before he can be disposed to prefer pomp and

parade to that idol of his heart, and child of his habits,—*Comfort*.

I imagine that the soreness of the Reviewer, in being reluctantly brought in his own mind to this issue, has tempted him to apply such uncouth appellations to our places of worship; so that he will really have some claims on our pity. Yet, in our pity, let us be just. If we have contributed little to the ornament of our country by our chapels, I cannot allow that we have put any very “hideous” objects before the eyes of our fellow-subjects; though possibly, to the sight of a Quarterly Reviewer, a Conventicle, if lovely as the Parthenon itself, would still be, from association, a most repulsive thing. Our many thousand meeting-houses have been erected by private subscription, and individual effort; we have, therefore, had no opportunity to act on any other principle than that of providing the largest accommodation at the least expense. It has not been in our power, by the aid of government grants, to expend, twenty, sixty, or eighty thousand pounds, in raising a place to accommodate one or two thousand persons; and if it were in our power, I trust it would not be in our inclination; for, to employ such extravagant amounts for such limited purposes, while so much more accommodation is wanting,

is sacrificing principle to taste, and preferring the *material* embellishment of the country to its intellectual and religious cultivation. Give us better men, if we have inferior churches; let the love of ornament be chastened by the deeper love of humanity; let not resources be squandered in decoration, while myriads of our countrymen are without the means of knowing and worshipping God who made them, or our towers, and spires, and porticoes, will live only, like those of the Greek, to tell to posterity the story of our ruin and our shame.

There is yet one point which has escaped the Reviewer, but which my interests induce me to put before you. It is only the simple truth, — that these churches, which the Reviewer is disposed to appropriate, belong as much to the Dissenter as to himself. The Dissenter pays equally with others for their erection or repair; they are the property of the nation; and they are, therefore, his. In admiring the distinctive beauties of Westminster Abbey, or Salisbury Cathedral, I do not feel that I am a Dissenter, or regret that I am not a Churchman; I know that I am an Englishman, and have all the pleasure which the sense of appropriation can bestow. But, here, as in other instances, the Reviewer labours

to show the advantage is with the non-conformists. Since all the inconveniencies of a church are *within* it, the Dissenter does not suffer by it; and since all its beauties are *external*, they are always open to his view, to assist the picture under his eye, or gratify the imaginings of his heart.

We now attend the Reviewer to another section of his subject:—

“ But we must not disguise another cause of the progress of Dissent in many large towns,—the poverty of the benefices. With this we shall connect, as operating most strongly in the same manner, what we dare to call the vulgar prejudices against the opulence of the Clergy. Their enormous wealth, and the implied consequence of rapacity and venality, has been the theme of every demagogue, and of every sour and discontented pamphleteer, during all the recent struggle with financial embarrassments, and excessive taxation. It is vain to detect the grossness of exaggeration, which is as greedily swallowed as it is undauntedly asserted. But though there are some prizes, some situations of great splendour and riches, we scruple not to assert on the other side, that, as a profession, taken generally, none is worse paid.”

This is certainly very edifying; but it would be still more so, if it was less paradoxical. The Clergy, the Reviewer says, cannot get forward, because their benefices are *poor*; yet Dissent is making progress with *no* benefices at all. This is very peculiar! The

Clergy, he insists, are very poor; yet the people persist in thinking them very opulent. Very strange and provoking this! It is in *vain*, he continues, to detect the grossness of exaggeration, which is so greedily swallowed; and yet he proceeds to make the attempt immediately. Well, we must follow him, and observe what he will make of his argument, with Despair for his companion.

“It is not fair to decide on the wealth of the individual by the items of his income. A man in one situation of life is far richer with £500 per annum than another with £1000. In order to estimate this point with justice, then, we must take into the account the great expenditure of the clerical education, as well as the manner in which the Clergy must live to keep up their respectability, we may add, their usefulness.”

The mode then prescribed for us to judge of the poverty of the Church, is by comparison, for if even it should be found to be wealthy in the positive degree, it might still be shown to be poor in the comparative. Let us ascertain the result. Is the Episcopal Church of Great Britain and Ireland poor in comparison with the Dissenting Church? The question, Mr. Editor, almost offends you. Is it poorer than the Scotch Church?—Certainly not. Is it poorer than the Catholic Church?—No. Is

it poorer than the Greek Church?—No. Is it poorer than the Mahomedan Church?—No. Then we arrive very pleasantly at one of those enigmatical conclusions, in which your Reviewer has such dear delight;—that this “poor,” “ill-paid,” “over-worked” church is only just the richest in the known world.

But we are to consider “the manner in which the Clergy must live to keep up their respectability.”—Yes, I have deeply considered it; and I fear the Reviewer is attaching to the consideration of it a very vicious meaning. In my judgment, a Clergyman, to keep up his respectability, must live “righteously, soberly, and godly in the world;” must have his life devoted to the discharge of all his official duties, and his heart enlarged by the exercise of all the benevolent affections; and then, should he be poor as Diogenes, he must still be respectable to every order of the community. The Reviewer’s judgment is evidently different. His ideas of respectability are linked to elevated station, fine equipage, extended retinue, equality in means and exhibition, with the wealthy and fashionable who surround him. Really, I have no sympathy with such notions; we must leave him to them;—to measure character by station, respectability

by appearance, and the mind by the purse ;— and, to be duped for his pains.

“ It happens most unfortunately, that in our older towns, with some exceptions, the benefices are remarkably small. In general, they were the vicarages held under the abbeys, or other ecclesiastical bodies. But the vicarial tithe is in its nature precarious, difficult to collect, and, usually, lamentably deficient in its amount, to say nothing of its occasional unpopularity. Hence those situations, which require the most eminent talents, the soundest discretion, and, in short, all that can conduce to extensive usefulness, are by no means courted by those whose splendid abilities, and high character, command preferment. It is in human nature, that any man should prefer a country residence, with a comfortable income, and no larger population than he can conscientiously take charge of, to a town-cure, which is at once poorly paid and worked. We are far from the most remote desire of depreciating the labours of many excellent men, who have filled these situations, or assuming that the duty discharged is influenced by the income received, but we would secure, if possible, the filling of these important situations, with the most efficient of the Clergy, by something like a bonus ; above all, we would have them not forced to take the whole oppressive duties upon themselves, but enabled to maintain one, or more, assistants in the work, as may be necessary.”

This is really an exposure, and I am too much the friend of the Church not to hope that most of it amounts to a libel. The Reviewer, indeed, timidly remarks that he is far from “ the most remote desire of *assuming* that the duty

discharged is influenced by the income received ;” but he, in fact, does more than this ; he not only *assumes* that it is so, he *proves* that it is, if his averments are to be trusted. He insists, that those situations “which require the most eminent talents, and soundest discretion, and, in short, all that can conduce to extensive usefulness,” are deserted, because they do not command high “preferment ;” and that a rural station is chosen, because there is less to do, and a “comfortable income” to enjoy. If language has the power of expression, this is undoubtedly saying, that the choice of the Clergy is influenced wholly by their pecuniary interests.

So then, Mr. Editor, if we follow this statement, “the most efficient of the Clergy” have absolutely abandoned the spheres of “extensive usefulness,” for those of ease and retirement ; and this, not from taste or habit, but from the very love of lucre ; so that if they are to be found at the post of duty, they must be allured to it by “*something like a bonus.*” And these are the men of “splendid abilities, and *high character !*” High character ! in men who are said to prefer their pleasure to their duty,—who ask not what good they can bestow, but what *bonus* they shall receive,—who will begin to enlighten and save their

fellow-men in good earnest, when, and in proportion as, they shall be well paid for it! As an Englishman, I say, Sir, Providence keep your church, and our church, and every church, from men of *such* “*high character, and splendid abilities!*”

What may not be true of a genus, may yet be applicable to a *species*; and I am half disposed to think the Reviewer writes, as he is fond of doing, under some personal “conviction,” that more or less truth is on his side. It was said of certain orations, that they *smelt of the lamp*, and I have a slight fancy, that this essay, to which we are giving such minute attention, *smells of the country*. Your Reviewer may, just by a possibility, be one of a little knotted band, who, though not nonconformists, are decided noncontents; who are languishing in rural privacy for conspicuous employment, but are striking for higher wages; who think themselves persons of “splendid abilities, and high character,” and who are soured because their merit has not found its remuneration. You, Mr. Editor, will best know whether I am correct in this supposition; but should you find me so, allow me, in confidence, to advise, that, when you shall be Lord Chancellor, as no doubt you hope to be, you have nothing to do with them.

These men of earth, who will only move as they are moved, and are susceptible of no movement but by the impetus of the heaviest of all metals,—be very shy of them! They will do little,—do that little ill,—and never think it sufficiently requited. If they say *bonus* now, they will soon cry *melior*, and if regarded, they will sing *optimus*;—and after all will be malcontents.

It is a little singular, in all this mournful, and overweening cant about the poverty of the Church, the Reviewer has taken not the least notice of the *only class* of its officers, which can really be denominated poor,—its Curates. When I found him venturing on the subject, I of course concluded, that he would endeavour to make out his representation, by throwing the stately Archbishop, the stalled Prebend, and the beneficed Rector, into deepest shade; while the poor Curate, who is truly “ill-paid and over-worked,” would have been brought, emaciated and depressed as he too often is, into the fore-ground of the picture. But, no,—he descends to nothing lower than the beneficed Clergyman; he has the boldness to place the riches of the Church before us, and then insists that it is not rich enough! Had he really raised his voice in behalf of poverty,—had he appealed not to

some extraneous power to help the Church, but to the beneficed parts of the Church, to assist the unbeneficed,—had he insisted on something like a fair adaptation of reward to exertion,—it had been magnanimous; and this, I suppose, is the reason he declined the employ. The Curate is poor and unbeneficed, and what is man, though a *Churchman*, to this Reviewer, if he be not beneficed?

A parenthesis, awkward thing as it is, is sometimes found to contain the force of the sentence to which it belongs; and so the Reviewer seeks to give pungency to his argument, by introducing a parenthetical paragraph, on his friends, the Dissenters. It is as follows:—

“We speak it to the honour of Dissenters, that their Ministers, considering the sphere in which they move, the situation in life which they have to support, the original expense at which they, or their families, have been at, to qualify them for their duties; (if, indeed, they have thought any qualification necessary;) are maintained in decent and respectable comfort. There are instances of large fortunes having been made, with the assistance, probably, of pious donations and bequests. Dissenting preaching, to a young man who has no alternative between that and trade, and has no very brilliant prospects, or even manual labour, is an excellent speculation. He has but to impose upon the minds of his congregation, by talent, or the appearance of it; to strike, if possible, into a new path, or to humour the caprices and prejudices of men, vain of their judgment, and

he is sure of a rich harvest from the weakness of mankind. This is one of the great evils of the sectarianism of the day, the preacher is perpetually tempted to abandon the bold vantage ground of truth, to conciliate his audience, and flatter their prejudices, on which his maintenance depends; he is not in any respect an independent teacher of religion; he is a stipendiary expositor of the opinions of his hearers. Such a system must lead to pride and self-sufficiency in the congregation; in the preacher, to an abject subserviency to the opinion of the leaders of the sect, and too frequently to an adulatory assurance of their superior righteousness, as individuals. This we assert, without fear of violating the rules of the strictest charity, as a necessary consequence of that infirm nature, of those passions, and that pride, which are the inheritance of men."

All this is said to the *honour* of Dissenters. A Dissenting teacher is a young man who has "no alternative between trade and preaching;" therefore, preaching is "an excellent speculation." He "imposes on his congregation, by talent, or the appearance of it;"—"he strikes into a new path,—and humours the caprices and prejudices of men."—"He is in no respect the independent teacher of religion; he is a stipendiary expositor of the opinions of his hearers." The system *must* lead to "pride and self-sufficiency in the congregation; in the preacher, to abject subserviency." He labours, however, in his vocation, and is "rewarded by a rich harvest," for

his pains. All this is very honourable, certainly ; but it evidently requires a slight exposition from the heretical pen of a non-conformist, to make it fully apparent. Let us see what can be made of it.

That the Dissenting congregations, according to their ability, and many of them, after the example of the primitive church, “beyond their ability,” contribute to the decent and comfortable maintenance of their pastors, is, I believe, notorious ; that it is, in their circumstances, much to their honour, must be unquestioned ; since it can only arise from the influence of an enlightened conscience, and “willing mind.” But by what authority does the Reviewer assert, “that large fortunes have been realized from these contributions ? I judge, from no better authority than his “convictions.” I do not know, nor have I heard, of an instance of a Dissenting Minister amassing, from his *ministerial salary*, a fortune ; and if such cases were in existence, I should consider them little either to our honour, or our benefit. If ever it should happen, that “large fortunes” are to be secured amongst Dissenters, Dissent would become, equally with endowed churches, an “excellent speculation ;” and all the young aspirants after “snug places and genteel employ,”

little work and large wages, who are now clamorous for emolument elsewhere, would be tempted to seek "advancement" in the Dissenting Church, and Dissent would speedily lose whatever makes it important to differ from our brethren of the great national community. No, Mr. Editor,—patronage and high fortune have been the ruin of your Church, and of the sister Church of Scotland, and (for you admit her legitimacy) of the mother Church of Rome; and the same splendid temptations would as surely be the ruin of the Dissenting Church, if ever they should exist. Be it known, therefore, far as the tidings may be beneficial to us, that we have no patronage to confer,—no "large fortunes" to propose. We have no mitres, no caps, no stalls; no advowsons, no sinecures, no extravagant incomes. If any young man will labour hard, and live hard, and all for the love of Him who has made him, and of Him who has redeemed him, and of man who is his brother, let him turn in with us, and we will do him good. But if a youth is seeking, by the use of his talents, worldly gain, let him know, that, of whatever description those talents may be, he may make them turn better to his worldly account, in any line of employ than that of Dissent. Our Ministers (apart from all notice of private

property) are poor, and willing to be poor. They must be prepared, in the language of one of them, "to do all the good they can, and to receive a good drubbing for it when it is done," in the "Quarterly" or elsewhere. They desire nothing beyond what is needful for suitable maintenance and enjoined hospitality. And all the claims of life being met, and its duties done, they are more than content to die, adopting the expressions of another of them, with the acknowledgment,—“I owe nothing,—I am owed nothing,—and I have nothing.”

Our Reviewer having insisted that Dissent is now becoming a "royal way" to good income and "large fortune," proceeds to show, most aptly, how much it is to the honour of Dissenters so to provide for their teachers, by illustrating their character and pretensions. There is a very polite and condescending notice of their original circumstances. The Dissenting teacher has usually "no very brilliant prospects" before him,—“no alternative between preaching and trade.” Very true this. But where is the implied disgrace? Our pastors have originally "no very brilliant prospects." How should they? They spring from ourselves, and the mighty and noble of this world are not with us, and the Test and Cor-

poration and Uniformity Acts are effectually interposed between us and "brilliant prospects." They have "no alternative between preaching and trade!" And why should they? Is it to be endured, that in this land, which owes its greatness to its commerce, the term *trade* should be employed to slur the condition of any man? Can it affect my real worth to society, whether I am born to five hundred pounds a year, or win it by laudable exertion? Is life less honourably spent in pursuing an honest vocation with industry, than in the ambitious pursuit of ribbons, garters, and coronets? But this Reviewer cannot apprehend these things. He is always recurring to his favourite standard; he must judge of inward worth by visible circumstances; and he would adore Beelzebub himself, if he should happen to be revealed to him, seated on a woolsack, and clothed in a robe of purple and fine linen.

And after all, Mr. Editor, what are the original circumstances of those who pass with most success through your Universities? Every class is found in them; but is it the wealthier or poorer classes that best succeed? Is it the youth who feels that he is amply provided for, or the youth who is conscious he must provide for himself, that discovers

usually the most industry, becomes the best scholar, secures the best development of his faculties, and is rendered the most useful member of the community? The leading names for exertion and scholarship in the three professions at the present time, contain the reply to this inquiry. Well then, the Dissenters are chiefly limited to one class for their teachers; but, in a full experiment on *all* the classes, it is found to be the very class which qualifies itself most successfully for professional labour. Our instructors are originally in dependent circumstances; in fact, in similar circumstances to those of Henry Kirke White, Dr. Southey, and yourself, and possibly a grade or two above those of the philosophical Reviewer; they are not seeking the ministry for themselves, but are sought out by others; and the buoyancy of their talent and character raises them to their proper level amongst their brethren. I have yet to learn that there is dishonour in such proceedings.

But these teachers, who are raised from nothing, are the subjects of "abject subserviency." They are tempted "to abandon truth, to conciliate the audience, and flatter their prejudices." They are in "no respect independent teachers of religion," and are "stipendiary expositors of the opinions of others." This is certainly, as a likeness, not

very amiable; but, as a proposition, it is somewhat diverting. In Independency there is no true independence; and the teachers of the Independents, who necessarily hold the first places, possess the chief talent, and exert the greatest influence in the body of Dissenters, are in a state of “abject subserviency to their hearers.” This is only supposing that the mightiest instruments in a given system are precisely those which are most subordinate; a very sober supposition this, for our Reviewer to make; especially if it is remembered, that having found it needful to represent the Clergy of his own church, as trammelled and enslaved, it became him to provide for our’s some kind of vassalage or other.

But what is the language of fact on this subject? I speak not of particular abuses; they are common to every system, and the criterion of none; but, if our ministers have been uniformly devoted to the cause of rational and practicable liberty,—is this the spirit of slaves? How is it, if they are individually oppressed, that they do not confederate; and confederated, do not resist? How is it, that no tale of their abject bondage has escaped them, and that they have not even solicited a friendly hand to effect their

redemption? Their fathers threw up emolument and distinction to be free! they refuse a participation in these rewards, that they may be free! And is it to be insinuated, that, rejecting Bondage, when she came to them crowned with "high fortune," and prelatical dignities, they would crouch to her reptile form, when it was stripped of all disguise? Happily, no mind can advance to such conclusions, except it be like the Reviewer's; and even he so little trusts the slander he would propagate, that it is laughable to find him indulging us in his essay with these two harmonious assertions,—that our teachers are held in most "abject subserviency" by their people;—and that the people gladly "submit to the bonds their teachers prescribe." Any man might entertain *one* of these declarations as possible; but I believe there is only *one* man living who could manage to digest them *in conjunction*.

The Reviewer, however, glances at the *principle*, and asserts that the *system* is such as *must* necessarily produce the results he ascribes to it. Let us examine it. The principle on which the Dissenting pastor is rewarded, is this,—*that the people whom he serves, should contribute suitably to his support*. To say nothing of the development of this principle in the New Testament, it is the ostensible

principle on which the ordinary reciprocities of social life are resting. The physician, the advocate, the sovereign, and the ministers of the sovereign, are all remunerated on this principle; and if the principle is bad in *one* case, it must be equally so in *every* case. If the Dissenting Minister is the "stipendiary expositor of the opinions of others," then so are Messrs. Croker and Canning; if the pastor is bereft of his independence, because he derives his supplies from his people, then so is the monarch. So much for the loyalty of this Reviewer! And so much, Mr. Editor, for entrusting delicate duty to awkward hands!

I concede that this principle is less recognized in the rewards of the Church, than elsewhere; and, in this respect, she is an anomaly in the Constitution, and an exception from the natural compacts of life. But, is she *benefited* by the deviation? Is *that* independence, which destroys the salutary connexion between faithful service and expected remuneration? Is *that* independence, which arms the Clergyman with a power to exact contributions in the mode most repulsive to the people of his charge; and which will ever be repulsive, whatever shall be said or sung on the divine and permanent right of tithes? Is *that* independence, which carries the Clergy-

man from door to door, half beseeching, as “an offering,” half demanding, as “a due,” the yearly donation ; and, which is at last met by an acknowledgment,—piteously small, and piteously given ?

At least, *this* is not the independence of Dissenters. Our pastors are our free choice ; we attend them from esteem and affection ; and they are supported by our free contribution ;—free in reference to all legal restraint, but conscientious and obligatory in relation to the sacred rule of our conduct. They *ask* not their own, seek not their own ; they care for the people, and the people care for them, —care begetting care, and love rewarding love. Their maintenance is a voluntary act of their charge ; and I believe there are few amongst them, who would not rather want it wholly, than receive it from the hand of compulsion.

The present head of dissertation is closed by the following paragraph.

“We are not aware that our preceding argument is vulnerable on more than one point, the objections to which we wish to anticipate. It may be asserted, that the expensive university education is by no means necessary to form parochial ministers ; and the theological knowledge and usefulness of the Dissenting Ministers may be invidiously appealed to as a corroboration of the objection. But, in the first place, it is certain that all the more eminent of the

old Dissenters were educated in the university;—the Howes, the Owens, and the Baxters; and the succeeding generation,—the Doddridges, Watts, and Lardners, were educated by men trained in the same system, before its spirit or its form had become obsolete among them. That almost all the leaders of the Methodists partook of the same advantages is notorious, and Wesley himself is perpetually ascribing his own success to the sound logic he imbibed at Oxford. At present, we have among the Dissenters, men of eloquence, of great natural talents, cultivated with uncommon industry; but nothing less than that complacent self-satisfaction, which identifies the knowledge of Calvinistic interpretations of scripture, with the highest scholarship, and most profound divinity, would place these men in comparison with the Laurences, the Sumners, the Hebers, the Blomfields, and the Marshes, to quote merely a few names which adorn the Establishment. But, the question is not whether a few individuals may not triumph over the disadvantages of the want of the best education, but whether we admit of any lower standard for the whole mass of the Clergy, who are to maintain the character of this country, for sober, rational, judicious theology.”

In this quotation, the Reviewer professes to notice the “only vulnerable point” of his argument. I consider, that it is just the *least* vulnerable; and has been introduced here, for the purpose of making a skilful manœuvre. For, if the question really is, whether we can admit of a lower standard of education for the Clergy of the land, surely, the unanimous reply must be, that, whatever is relinquished,

solid learning must be retained. He is aware of this; and by endeavouring to pass the strongest point in his "argument," as the very weakest, he seeks to pretend, he has carried every thing, in carrying what could not be refused; and he would thus artfully screen and assist that highest object of his sublimated hopes,—*the good benefice*.

Even this projected triumph would not do, however, unless he could fetter his enemies, the hapless Dissenters, to his victorious car. Their teachers have no education, compared with the Clergy; and their learning amounts to little more than a veil to cover their ignorance, which is so gausy every body sees through it; and unless we would reduce the Church to their own wretched predicament, we must, per force, defend the present benefices, and make more.

You are quite aware, by this time, Mr. Editor, that your Reviewer has a method, eminently his own, of getting "about and about" his subject, in proportion to its difficulty. His peculiar tactics are here brought into requisition. He was conscious that if the education of Dissenters should be made a serious question, the mind even of a candid and well informed Churchman would spontaneously recur to such names as Howe, Owen,

and Baxter, Doddridge, Watts, and Lardner ; he, therefore, shrewdly anticipates the evil, and boldly claims them, directly or indirectly, for *university-men*. Well, this is a most *useful* mode of argumentation. The original non-conformists were trained in the university, therefore, we must not boast of them ; their successors were taught on the same plans, therefore, we must not boast of them ; and should the Dissenters be wise enough to abide by the same system, to the third and fourth generation, and should eminent men continue to spring from it, they would all derive their greatness from an education, nominally dissenting, but virtually and truly, of the university ! so that we must not boast at all ! “Without question,” the Reviewer has only been enabled to compass a conclusion, so comprehensive as this, “by the sound logic which he has imbibed at Oxford.” For my part, I have enjoyed no such privilege. I am a plain man, and have a plain understanding ; and the worst of it is, that, discipline my thoughts as I may, they are always stumbling on such “lame conclusions” as, a Churchman is a Churchman, a Dissenter is a Dissenter, and ten and ten make twenty.

But, seriously, Mr. Editor, if the original Dissenters derived their greatest advantage

from a university education, I have to ask, How their successors were found *without it*? Have the universities been left accessible to them, and have they ceased to value the benefit they can confer? If so, they are the legitimate objects of invidious comparison, and caustic raillery; but, if it shall be admitted, as you are sensible it must, that they are actually and unjustly excluded from the great public schools of the empire, you will, at once, perceive, that our amiable Reviewer is indulging in the sport of all vulgar minds, by adding insult to injury.

I am as ready, as any Episcopalian can be, to mention the names of Laurence, Heber, Blomfield, and Marsh, and those of many others, equally eminent, though not equally known, with respect, as men of high classical and mathematical attainments; and, I will as readily admit, that in these departments of scholarship, the Dissenters have none who may compete with them. Yet, in making this admission, it should, in all fairness, be remarked, that it was, and still is, *impossible* that they should excel in these particular branches of learning. And the impossibility arises altogether from existing circumstances, and not from defective capacities. Talent and industry, no man, as this time of day, will

dare to say they want; and when it shall happen, that their mental energies, by a greater division of labour, are directed to one exclusive object, with all the facilities for attaining it, which are now the subject of monopoly, they will not consent to be second to the highest name in the brilliant calendar of science and literature.

At present, we necessarily want the *means*, both of forming, and of providing for, the superior classical and mathematical scholar. Really, to excel in either department,—not youth, or maturity,—but *life* must be consecrated to the pursuit. Our Church cannot as yet bestow this privilege on her sons. She is only competent to provide for pastors; and her pastors are so occupied by daily duties, and the claims of active benevolence, as to leave them no choice in their pursuits, whatever may be their tastes. By consequence, supposing the acquisitions were really *made*, we have not the power of *rewarding* them. In the Church, success in these particular acquirements, is certainly followed by the highest honours, and the most substantial emoluments; with us, they find but an indifferent market. We have no valuable master-ships, fellowships, or professorships, to distinguish them; the very tutors of our

ministerial seminaries, have, almost without exception, to nearly the present time, been compelled to amalgamate as they could, the somewhat conflicting duties of the professor and pastor. However, every thing must have its growth. The "two universities" were once no way better than what our seminaries are now. Dissent is making a simultaneous progress with light and freedom; and, as it advances, the facilities for every class of scholarship will be increased. We may be assisted by no government grant, for the encouragement of college learning, like the Catholics; we may be still shut out from the great national well-springs of knowledge, and be obliged to contribute towards their support; and yet we may realize, equally with the most privileged, whatever can be desirable to a wise and good mind. Nor is it improbable that the "Quarterly" may aid us in a more speedy arrival at the goal. It was by the "Quarterly's" mean ridicule of the American navy, that it was made respectable; and it is possible, (for we Dissenters are not quite perfect,) that the same dignified and gracious carriage towards the nonconformists, may hasten them, by a few degrees, in condensing their too scattered means and energies, to supply the existing defects in their body; and the good-humoured

Reviewer may, probably, have the gratification of seeing, instead of contracted and separated academies, which scarcely meet his eye, a “hideous and unsightly” Dissenting university, thankfully acknowledging its precocious existence to the *subscriptions*, not of his purse, certainly, but of his pen.

Before our Reviewer’s conclusions can be entirely disposed of, there is one question he has avoided, which it is needful to settle. It is the simple inquiry,—*What is education?* I would define it, as the discipline of the mental and moral powers for their especial uses in after life; and it is obvious that the best education is that which is most successful in effecting the proposed object. Then, it is to be remembered, that the Reviewer is discussing not education generally, but the education of the *ministers of religion*; and we shall quickly find the subject coming before us in a very different aspect. A man of capacity, by close training and continued application, may unquestionably be formed into a fine classic, a profound calculator, or a subtle metaphysician; and it is of the highest consequence that the country should always have a regular supply of such men; but how can these exclusive acquisitions qualify a person to be the useful and efficient *pastor*? Theology is the

science of the minister of religion. Whatever is fine in taste, or profound in numbers, is to be pursued, not solely and for its own sake, but only as it shall assist him in the elucidations of biblical truth, and the study of divine things. If, therefore, his studies shall not have been *subordinated* to his proper duties, his excellence in *one* line of knowledge, may prove his deficiencies in *another*,—his intimacy with the classics may have occasioned his estrangement from the scriptures; he may be admirably fitted to do what it will never be his duty to perform, and every way disqualified to answer the claims of his daily vocation.

Whatever may be the present defects in the education of our teachers, we conceive they have a decided advantage in the *adaptation* of their pursuits to their prospects. They may not be so familiar as some with a particular segment in the circle of general science; but they have a better acquaintance with the *whole*; wherever they may be superficial, they are not so in theology; and although the Reviewer is resolved to refer it to “nothing less than complacent self-satisfaction,” we have no hesitation in declaring, that the Dissenters have names among them equal to the highest in his community, for “profound divinity;” and that, on the average, the pastors of the

Dissenting Churches, in theological attainment and ministerial qualifications, are every way *superior* to the pastors of the Episcopal Establishment. The Clergyman is frequently, first educated, and finally inducted to a benefice, with little or no regard to the duties of his office; hence we often have, speakers without a voice, orators without persuasion, devotionalists who cannot pray, and divines who have not an ordinary acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and the material discussions which have arisen from them. On the contrary, the nonconformist teacher is *nothing*, unless he is physically and mentally prepared to discharge the functions of his ministry with efficiency; hence, in the course of twenty years, I have known many, who, for want of *talent*, or want of its *adaptation*, have utterly failed among the Dissenters; and who, having found admission to the endowed Church, have, by the help of printed manuscript sermons on the one hand, and the liturgy on the other, continued in an employ for which they were never meant, and withheld from one in which possibly they might have been useful to the world.

Not many years since, I passed some time in one of the university cities. I had leisure; and I willingly sought improvement and gra-

tification in other places besides those of my denomination. I entered one of the principal churches; it was a venerable and imposing structure, and the portion appropriated to worship was comfortably filled, and by persons of plainer habits than one had reason to expect. I waited for the commencement of service, expecting, as I had a right to do, in one of the strong holds of episcopacy, that every part of it would be observed with more than usual efficiency. The liturgy began, but it was read with false cadence, false accent, with indecent hurry, and untimely pauses. The psalmody intervened; but nothing was to be heard, except the rattling sound of the organ, and the shrill cries of a few noisy children. The preacher ascended to the pulpit. He had an intelligent and pleasing appearance; and, without doubt, was an accomplished man. He opened a manuscript book, and read for about twenty minutes. The little treatise was correct in style, and carefully composed. But it was an essay, rather than a sermon; and better fitted for the "Senate House," than the Church. Distinctions were made too nice to be appreciated by the audience; points were put in dispute, and left in doubt, on which it is unwise as unsafe to disturb the common mind; and the

whole was read with that set voice, and philosophical indifference, as to make it a question, whether the reader had any definite object before him, beyond the occupation of an allotted period of time. It was too limited for a disquisition, and too refined for a popular lecture; and whatever it contained, might have been known and repeated, though the Saviour of men had never come, and the Apostle Paul had not been inspired.

The next service I attended, was at a meeting-house, but not of my own denomination. Here was no busy chattering of beadles, door-keepers, and parish clerks, up to the very moment of opening the devotions; nor any gay bowing and curtesying from pew to pew in the congregation. There was a manifest seriousness, as if coming under the common observation of a superior Being. The pastor was not in his place, but a young man, who had recently completed his education, took the pulpit as an occasional supply. The psalmody was without any instrumental accompaniment; it was simple and animated, because congregational. A free prayer was offered with much earnestness of manner, and comprehension of petition. A freshness was given to our ordinary wants and desires, by the varied mode of expressing

them, and the attention was thus kept awake to regard them. The preacher announced his text with seriousness. A slight flush on his cheek, and as slight a tremour on his accents, told you that he was the subject of strong, though controlled, emotion. The people were silently waiting for his words, and he must address them for a considerable period so as to promote their edification. He felt that his sentences were to be tried by no negligent hearers; that he had no manuscript to lounge on; that in the solemn duty to be discharged, he was thrown entirely on his own resources of mind and heart, and he was with the people, like Luther and Paul, "with fear and trembling." He passed onward to the exposition and application of his theme. As he advanced, whatever fear might have possessed him, "which hath bondage," was cast out; and the "burden of the Lord" alone oppressed him. The raised countenance evinced the sympathy of his heart with his subject; and, as he got clear of necessary explication, and approached the close, he proceeded with holy and heavenly fervour to press its most solemn inferences on the consciences of all present. The fixed attention of the congregation, the spirit with which they sung the final hymn, and the quiet manner in which they retired

from the house of God, were sufficient indications of the interest they had taken in the worship.

Stranger as I was to the people and the preacher, I participated in their serious enjoyments; and I sought, in a rural walk beyond the skirts of the town, a period for reflexion. It was impossible to avoid a mental comparison of the individuals I have slightly described. "Here are," thought I, "two men casually put before me as the representatives of two churches, and neither of them undue specimens. The one has been bred in schools, matured in colleges, and distinguished by the highest honours of the university; but he has not one qualification of mind, or heart, or habit, for his most important and daily duties. The other, probably, has but a subordinate knowledge of scientific and polite literature; but he has studied his Bible critically and devotionally. Whatever he has, is *available* for the *pulpit*"; and he is to be described, not as a classic, nor as a mathematician, nor as an antiquary, but as a "minister of the word of life." Judge the individuals by their *vocation*, and there is no comparison; and, notwithstanding the high patronage and worldly influence of the endowed Church, Dissent must necessarily spring up in the very shadow

of her domes, and minarets, and spires, if her ministry is to remain so culpably inefficacious. Such reflections gave me deep regret; not that I would have the one Church *worse*, but the other *much better*; and I did not reach my resting place without some desires, which I know were sincere, and hope were devotional, that a Church, which had been a grand instrument in the Reformation, and which is still a principal feature in the Protestant bulwarks of Christendom, might yet contribute, as she ought, to the instruction and salvation of a lost world.

But we must proceed with the Reviewer to an additional section of his subject. He finds that another great disadvantage to the Church arises from the *superior liberality of the Clergy!*

“ Wondrous all,
And still, at every step, new wonders rise !”

But let us hear him.

“ If, however, the bold and decisive way in which we have dismissed the vulgar exaggeration of the wealth of the Clergy, may have excited surprise, probably this will be still more the case, when we lay down, as the next cause of the progress of Dissent, the superior liberality of opinion, professed both in word and practice, by the Clergy of the Establishment.”

Yes; the Reviewer has, indeed, disposed of the benefices with "a bold and decisive hand;" and it was with the design, I imagine, of training it to do "yet bolder deeds." Still he is not quite assured of success; his averments may "sound like a paradox;" he has already "excited surprise," and is about to do it increasingly; and he has the presentiment of the mountebank upon him, who, in playing off his hocus-pocus tricks, fears, lest in raising surprise into astonishment, and astonishment above belief, the beholder may fall down into detection.

And really, the Reviewer's misgivings are on the right side of the case; for to make the very best of it, the assertions, that the Church is very poor, and that she is thought very wealthy; that the Church is the very paragon of liberality, and yet that the world will talk of her "high church bigotry and intolerance;" must "sound like a paradox," "as like as like can be;"—as much a paradox as if John Howard were accused of misanthropy; or the "pilot who weathered the storm," of humility.

However, skill may do something for a subject otherwise very hopeless; and the Reviewer assures us, if with him "we will inquire calmly, and reason temperately," the point he argues for will come out as "a demonstrative truth."

Well, we are fond of truth, and of demonstration; and were pleased to have it announced, that, at last, the worthy essayist was about to grapple with his subject by the mere force of calm reason. This is the way in which he begins his “calm inquiry,” and “temperate reasoning.”—“The assertion of exclusive spiritual privileges is the principle of sectarianism; its life-blood is detraction from the labours of the Established Church.”—This is “*calm inquiry!*” Then he continues; — “But, exaggerated pretensions, whether in politics, physic, or religion, will invariably lead away the multitude.”—This is “*temperate reason!*” Verily, the Reviewer may prove just what *he pleases* by *this sort* of reasoning — that the earth was made square, or was not made at all, for instance — and may “ascribe his success to the sound logic he has imbibed at Oxford.”

The remainder of the paragraph is equally calm and equally conclusive; it is sustained by a collection of those *petit morceaux* sentences, similar to many we have noticed before. One cannot be at the pains of continuing to expose a set of unconnected and impudent assertions, which touch on every subject, and illustrate none; I shall content myself with setting the Reviewer’s own sentences in juxta-position, and thus give him the

honour of acting the appellant and respondent in the same cause.

Reviewer's Statement.

"The next cause of the progress of Dissent, is the *superior liberality* of the Clergy."

"The pale of the narrow sect, if it does not contain all who are in the way of salvation, comprises all who are endowed with certain *peculiar advantages*, unattainable by those without."

"The life-blood of Dissent, is *detraction* from the labours of the established Clergy."

"(The Dissenting teacher is aided by) the *dauntless* assertion of his (*hearers'*) *ignorance* and *dislike* of the

Reviewer's Reply.

"May not intercourse with members of the Establishment, who are *religious without bigotry*, have an effect in *removing* the sour and obstinate prejudices in which the Dissenters have been nurtured?"

"The Clergyman insists (with those who would forsake his Church) on the sin of *schism*,—*legitimate* ordination,—and the *power of administering the sacraments conferred on the Clergy*."

"The Dissenters, we have no doubt whatever, consider the *interests* of the Church absolutely necessary to the maintainance of true religion in this country."

"He is in no respect an *independent* teacher, he is a stipendiary expositor of the *opinions of his hearers*."

gospel, and perhaps the *extravagant* claims of the wildest enthusiasm, the *relentless terrors* of the most gloomy fanaticism."

"But exaggerated pretension, whether in politics, physic, or religion, will invariably lead away the *multitude*."

"It is in every respect an *unequal strife*; on the one side, the appeal is to the passions and to conceit; on the other, to sober reason."

Such a system must lead to pride and *self-sufficiency* in the *congregation*; in the *preacher*, to an *abject subserviency*."

"The Clergyman has so many opportunities of intercourse with the *poor*, such facility of communication, that in the cottage his presence will always be welcome, and his character command attention."

"Her cause (the Church) is that of good sense, and rational piety; her benefits are felt through the *whole mass* of society. We therefore *trust* her without the *least apprehension of danger*."

Admirable propositions! and admirably refuted! Really, Mr. Editor, I must compliment my sagacity, in thus putting the Reviewer against himself; and, since he is so very clever in *balancing* both sides of an argument, I cannot compliment your's, unless you press him into the service of the Court of *Equity*.

Then the entire paragraph, that it may lose nothing of its unction, is closed by such a sweet scrap of sentimentality !

“Thus that very charity,” he says, “which proves the Clergyman to possess more real practical knowledge of the Scripture, his conscientious horror of infringing, in the least, on the great commandment which forbids to ‘bear false witness,’ are his greatest impediments in the contest; while he is spoken against in language disparaging, contemptuous, or superciliously compassionate, his only recrimination can be what scarcely reaches the understanding, or touches the pride-hardened heart, temperate argument and affectionate expostulation.”

How very plaintive and touching is all this ! The Clergy are “impeded, controuled,” inslaved. They are “trammelled” by liberality, and oppressed by the meek hands of *charity* ! What a relish this man has for that sort of antithesis which leads one to absurdity ! What a delectation for that species of the sublime which we denominate—bathos !

Well, there may yet be hope. If that Church, which maintains, after the good opinions of the inspired Seneca and Socrates, that virtue is its own reward, should discover that the converse of the maxim is true, she may determine, that liberality and charity are not of the *virtues* ;

and, by some five-mile act or other, may put them far from the community; and then we shall have this most charitable of all churches, no longer "impeded" by such weaknesses, sharpening, for the first time, her tongue to slander, and hardening her hand to persecution, to try what can be done by "dogmatic assertion," "contemptuous" looks, and "bearing false witness." It is not difficult to say, from the spirit of his performance, that the Reviewer has anticipated this consummation; and should it really arrive, we must gratefully remember, that we owe it to the very luminous, but somewhat antinomian manner, in which he has illustrated the *vicious* effects of *virtue*.

Till then, we are in duty bound to take the Church on her professions of liberality; and, as difficulties often vanish between antagonists, on an explanation of terms, I imagine we can have no backwardness to the concession the Reviewer requires, when we regard the limitations which he himself proposes.

"We willingly concede," he says, "to the Dissenters, the having clearly proved the political right of exercising free judgment in matters of religion; but the moral expediency of assuming and acting upon that right is quite another question; and can only be rationally advised on the principle that all are so far advanced in religious know-

ledge, so unbiassed by prejudice, so uninfluenced by caprice, and so entirely independent, and abstracted from all extraneous and less spiritual motives, as to pass a calm, sober, and dispassionate judgment, of this most important subject. We confess, however unfashionable the doctrine, that we think humility and self-distrust would be more wise and prudent in the mass of mankind, than a presumptuous confidence in their own decisions. ‘Let every one judge for himself,’ say the Dissenters. Let every one, say we, be first enabled to form a rational, sober, informed, and deliberate opinion before he judges.

“With the privilege of thinking for himself in these matters, the consequence of answering for himself is inseparably connected; answering, we mean, for the fair and impartial consideration of the subject in dispute, as far as his ability extends; the exclusion of every other motive, but sincere desire of truth, and earnestness in seeking his salvation.”

We sincerely think the Reviewer has made one of his best efforts to get rid of “dogmatic assertion,” and to “reason calmly” in this portion of his subject. He knew that he was approaching a standard principle in the controversy between us; and, that it became him to meet it with a steady countenance; he felt that it was his duty (it is often the drudgery of hypocritical pretension) to seem to retain what he actually did not possess, and all the light forces of craft and manœuvre are put in motion to cover the point. Let us observe him.

“We willingly concede,” he says, “to the Dissenters, the having clearly proved the political right of exercising free judgment in matters of religion.” A most valuable concession this; and, though with his ordinary consistency he afterwards insinuates a doubt, none will doubt but himself; and this single admission makes the world a lasting debtor to the Dissenters.

However, this said concession is by no means to be considered a gratuity from our Reviewer;—he is too fond of benefices to be equally so of gratuities;—it is thrown out as “something like a bonus,” that while we are admiring and chasing the “golden apple,” he may advance in safety to his illegitimate conclusions. He continues;— “But the moral expediency of assuming and acting on that right, is quite another question; and can only be rationally advised on the principle, that all are so far advanced in religious knowledge, so unbiassed by prejudice, &c. as to pass a calm, sober judgment on this most important subject.” Now, here are three things:—the right of judging, the use of that right, and the abuse of it,—all huddled together, that a mist of obscurity may weaken our perception of the defect in his argument. Let me dispose of the *abuse* in the right at once, as it can have nothing to do with the inquiry,

and as it will answer most of what is here quoted, and a great deal of splenetic flippancy, which I have not quoted. He insinuates, that as the judgment is liable to abuse, the use of it can be advised only on the principle, that we are so well informed, and so unbiassed, as to exercise it properly. This, and whatever is said to the same end, means nothing, except it is designed to imply, that the Dissenters, in contending for a right, are silly enough to contend for its *misuse* likewise. Is it necessary to resist such an implication? Can any one admit, that the Dissenters, in maintaining that a man may judge in religious concerns for himself, has a right to judge amiss? No,—we necessarily believe that the privilege brings its own responsibility with it; and, that the man who uses his judgment is amenable for its decisions, to the extent of its capacity, and to the highest of all authority.

Then we are left to the subtle distinction he would introduce between judgment and judging. He allows, because he is obliged, that man has the *right to use* his judgment; but he contends that *the use* of it is “quite another question.” Very metaphysical indeed! I recollect, Mr. Editor, when a certain preacher had dealt very largely in *this sort* of metaphysics, a poor woman of his congre-

gation was asked, whether she understood him. Her reply was, "Yes, sure!" "And do you know the meaning of me-ta-phy-sics?" "For certain I do," she exclaimed, "Why, isn't it *meat* and *physic*? And are not they things we always want, and should always be thankful for?" I confess the shrewd old lady has the advantage of me, for I can find neither food nor medicine in the metaphysics of our Reviewer.

Happily we are favoured with an attempt at farther explanation. "Let every one judge for himself," say the Dissenters; yes, we are satisfied with this representation, and glory in it. "Judge not," we say, "that ye be not judged;" let no man profess to be the keeper of another's conscience, lest he be judged for his presumption. The conscience is answerable to God alone; whether man judge ill or well, he is free to judge, independently of all human controul, while he is responsible to his Maker in the highest degree. This is what *we* say. Now what says the Church?—"Let every one, say we, be first enabled to form a rational, well-informed, deliberate opinion, before he judges." That is, man has the right to judge for himself, but before he has the right to use this right, it must be ascertained that he is able to use it rightly. If we get rid of

the nonsense which envelops this proposition, it will stand thus;—Man has only a prescriptive and subordinate right of thinking for himself, and that right is to be regulated by the judgment of those who are above him, and able to judge more correctly. Well, if this is what the Reviewer means in contending for the “superior liberality” of the Church, we can have no controversy with him; and I can easily comprehend how it is that she is “trammelled and oppressed” by her liberality. If this is the explanation, the Church is certainly liberal “to a fault.” It must have been *this* liberality which led her to conclude, that she had power to decree forms and ceremonies, and to construct one creed on another, uniting with the most dogmatical of them, the most awful denunciations. It must have been *this* liberality which framed the Test and Uniformity Acts, and led her to expel the best of her sons from her bosom. It must have been *this* liberality which put her in opposition to the Bible Society; and, when it could be opposed no longer, led her to endeavour that the Bible should not be trusted any where without the Prayer Book and Homilies for its expositors. It must have been *this* liberality which induced her to cherish Lord Sidmouth’s Bill; and, to the present day, in

a thousand instances, to withhold eleemosynary gifts from those who will not defer to her judgment.

The only difference between the Reviewer and myself, is one of words; what he calls **LIBERALITY**, I should call **INTOLERANCE**. What he pleads for in the Church, is what would satisfy any Church, whether Papal or Mahomedan. "You shall judge for yourselves, but we must first decide on your ability to judge aright." It is the grossest intolerance! It is this principle that has kindled the fires in Smithfield, and consumed our fathers at the stake. It is this principle that has placed the Pope in the throne of God, and erected the Inquisition on the ruins of the fair temples of justice and mercy. It is Intolerance, gaunt and terrible in her form, with baleful fires gleaming in her eyes, and sulphureous vapour steaming from her lips, and decrees, bulls, and anathemas, lodged in her hand; with the phantom superstition on the one side, lifting her sightless eye-balls to heaven, and the imp Bigotry on the other, bearing the branding-iron, the faggot, and the fetter-lock; that has gone over the world, like the monsoon of the desert, blighting every thing she touched, withering up the energies of man, and expelling light, liberty, and hope, from his earthly habitation!

She first tasted of blood when the world was in its infancy, in the murder of Abel; and though ten thousand thousand of human victims have since been offered on her altars to appease her appetite, it is unappeased and insatiable!

And it is this demon that is deified under the name of liberality!

A FABLE

KINDLY SUGGESTED BY THE REVIEWER.

Once upon a time, in a certain island, situate in 'the uttermost parts of the earth,' there lived a lady, who had as many children as there are days in 'the year. She was a person of austere opinions, and rather *lordly* habits; and though, in managing her household, she did not avow herself infallible, she not infrequently exposed herself to the inconsistency of acting as if she were. These vices, however, if vices they must be called, were generated by her education, as her mother was a woman of still more dominant temper, and had gratified it so much, that in her dotage she ventured to think her judgment could

not err, and that her authority ought not to be questioned.

Of course, so large a family could not be governed for a day without rule. So the good lady of the house made known her will by successive enactments, and enjoined the strictest obedience on all. Unhappily, the infirmities of her nature crept into her regulations; her rules, while they neglected the principles of a generous obedience, descended to enforce the most trifling acts of a needless conformity, and threatened to fritter away the authority they were framed to uphold.

And it came to pass, when the children approached to maturity, they began, as all children will, to think for themselves. They had long felt, that the restrictions laid upon them were exceedingly burdensome, and they now thought them unnecessary, for the purpose of expressing a true and affectionate subordination. And, without meaning any vexation to their esteemed parent, they ventured to conclude, that they might certainly use their liberty in trifling observances, since, on every material occasion, they gave her the sincerest proof of attachment to her person.

However, the worthy matron was exceedingly vexed, and uttered many hard speeches.

And, when her wrath had a little subsided, she said to herself, ‘ Let me now deal wisely with these my children,—they have surely had too much liberty,—too much sport,—and they have waxed fat, and are kicking against my lawful authority. I must increase their tasks,—I must multiply my rules,—and I must see that my will is law.’ So she framed an Act of Uniformity ;—to bind what was unbound,—and to bind still faster, what was already in bonds.

This enactment was a most admirable specimen of detailed legislation. By it she provided for the most minute movements of the entire household. It prescribed, what her children should wear, where they should go, and what they should do ; it commanded how to shape their bands and frills, and how to cut their gowns and cloaks ; it told them when to stand, and when to kneel ; it furnished them with some nice prayers, which they were to say, and informed them when they were to say them. It taught them when to curtsy and to bow, and when to turn their backs on the *western* world. It enjoined, that they were to receive the cross on their forehead, after the pious custom of her mother’s children. It informed them when they must be merry, and when they were obliged to be

sad. It prescribed, if they should ever wed, how they were to be married; and, if they should ever die, how they were to be buried. And so when it had been examined, and it was thought that nothing could be left to the option of her family, it was posted in the avenues of the dwelling, and sanctioned by threatenings and denunciations, which were certainly severe to issue from maternal lips.

When these regulations were known, there was no little commotion in her ladyship's mansion. Her children had now mostly reached an adult state; and they were all seized with some surprise and alarm, at this needless display of morose temper and arbitrary authority. Some of a pliant disposition, unused to the trouble of judging for themselves, with a morbid dislike of family discussion, ascribed the proceeding to conscientious motive, though to infirm mind; and prepared as they could, to endure the irksome yoke. Many received it without any anxiety; they were already resolved on yielding whatever conformity should be required; for their parent was old, and honourable, and wealthy, and, if her exactions should press her to extremities with any of her children, the inheritance would be the larger for those that remained. But there were many who were inclined to ques-

tion and object. They thought that their mother could hardly be serious ; and, if serious, hardly sane. Possibly some sinister counsel had influenced her to this measure ; and when they should appeal to her, she would relent. Judging her attachment by their own, they hastened to her presence, and remonstrated. — ‘ Surely,’ they urged, ‘ such restrictions, and such threatenings, could not be meant for *them*. They were dutiful children, and it could not be meant to reduce them to slaves. They were most willing to offer whatever love and service became a child to a parent, but they trusted they might claim relief from restraints that were more than childish,—that they might have the liberty of judging and acting for themselves, in those petty affairs which did not affect their filial devotedness.’ The parent was impatient and inexorable. ‘ It is my will,’ she exclaimed, ‘ that is enough ! Judge for yourselves ! No,—ye shall not !—Wait till I find you are “ enabled to form a rational and deliberate opinion.”—Judge for yourselves ! Am I thus to be defied in my own house ?—No,—ladies and gentlemen, if ye scruple to wear my livery, ye shall out of my service,—if ye must needs judge for yourselves, ye must needs provide for yourselves,—so away with ye !’

And so saying, they were hurried from her presence, and then from their natal habitation, into the wide world, dishonoured by an enraged parent, calumniated as disobedient and unnatural children,—without a portion, without pity, and without a home.

Now the part of the family which still remained in the maternal dwelling, were, by the terror of this act, brought to a state of complete conformity and non-resistance, though it had not improved their confidence or affection. They imagined, that, as the directions were trifling, the observance would be easy; nevertheless, when they were to be regarded day after day, when they lay down, and when they rose up, when they were abroad, and when they were at home, and in every motion and every word, they became almost intolerable to many of them. With growing disgust to the rule, and diminished affection to its author, it was not possible to avoid a relaxation in their compliances.

Meantime, the matron became more tyrannical with age. She was jealous of her authority and her children. She established menial spies over them; and would not admit them to attend on her presence but on an oath, that they would implicitly obey whatever she had or might ordain. This restless and prejudiced

scrutiny led to the detection of many omissions, which she construed into conspiracies against her will, and, perhaps, her life. Acts of Uniformity were revived with more degrading restrictions, and severer terrors. So that another portion of her children, choosing rather to renounce their patrimony than suffer a thralldom which was past endurance, retired from her power and abode for ever.

Now, it happened, that morose as she was, repentance came to this lady, but came too late. When she had risen in years, and most needed the comfort of her children, she would think of those she had driven needlessly from her embraces, and survey their vacant places with pain. And when she reflected, that those who remained, she had refused to trust; and, that those who had left, were, in despite of her cruelty, advancing to honour and usefulness, she was pricked to the heart with grief.

Grief, assisted by infirmity, hung upon her month after month, till she fell sick; and her sickness, nourished by grief, settled into hopeless melancholy. Her household surrounded her, and endeavoured to rouse and cheer her, by proclaiming her virtues—her wisdom, her liberality, and her decorum,—but they were little suited to help *her* case. Her physicians were called in; some advised she should be

bled freely ; while others contended that bleeding had supervened the disease, and that “a comprehension” alone could save her. It was all in vain ; “the strife was every way an unequal one ;” the malady made progress ; it was “not hereditary,” for it had never been in the family, but it was deep ; it was “not inveterate,” but it was fatal. It sprang from the dissent and separation she had occasioned in her family ; the children she had rejected were prosperous without her, and those she had pampered, were asking less service, and higher benefice ;—this was an evil medicine could not cure. As nervous excitement had brought on the stupor of melancholy, so her heavy grief was followed by sudden paralysis. She moaned and sobbed, and sobbed and moaned ; and uttering as she could, ‘My children, my children,’ she expired.

So when her breath was really gone, the most distinguished of her favoured children assembled in close consultation, to settle what was to be done. And it was generally agreed, that, as apart from the honour of their parent, it would not be to their benefit, that the real circumstances of her death should transpire, it should be announced, that her decease was produced by a sudden *enlargement of the heart, and suppression of the bile*. And it was further

determined, that, as one of her most indulged children had the faculty of composing apt little pieces on the birth days and burials of great personages, that he should be expected to prepare a suitable epitaph, to exhibit her character in its *proper* lights.

So her children bore her to the burial place of her fathers; and they mourned and were inconsolable at the corners of the streets, and in the market places, for forty days; and their more gifted brother prepared the following just and natural inscription for her tomb, that posterity might know her character, and lament her loss:—

HERE RESTS
 THE PUREST OF WOMEN,
 THE MOST GENEROUS OF FRIENDS,
 THE MOST EXALTED OF CHRISTIANS.
 IN FAITH,
 THE MIRROR OF ORTHODOXY.
 IN HOPE, DIVINE AND ETHEREAL.
 IN CHARITY, THE BOND OF MANKIND.
 EXCELLING
 IN EVERY RELATIONSHIP,
 AS A PARENT,
 SHE SURPASSED HERSELF.

THE SUPREME HEAD
OF A
SINGULARLY NUMEROUS FAMILY,
SHE DISCOVERED ASTONISHING SAGACITY
AND CARE
IN THEIR MANAGEMENT.
HER VOICE WAS HARMONY.
HER RULE, WISDOM.
HER YOKE, LOVE.
WITH AUTHORITY UNLIMITED,
AND A JUDGMENT THAT WAS THOUGHT
INFALLIBLE;
SHE RESTED HER INFLUENCE
NOT ON THESE,
BUT ON THE REPOSING AFFECTION
OF HER CHILDREN;
SHE STUDIED THEIR FRAILTIES,
AND ACCOMMODATED HERSELF TO THEIR
DISPOSITIONS
TO THE UTTERMOST.
BUT, ALAS! EXCESSIVE VIRTUE
FEEDS ON THE VERY LIFE BY WHICH IT IS
SUSTAINED.
LIKE ANOTHER PELICAN,
SHE NOURISHED HER CHILDREN
ON HER BLOOD;

AND LITERALLY EXPIRED
BENEATH THE EXHAUSTION
OF HER
“SUPERIOR LIBERALITY.”*

In restoring our attention from the dead to the living, we find our Reviewer still in grief; and his grief springs from the progressive literature of his friends, the Dissenters. He cannot trust himself far on this subject, lest he should make bad worse, by inviting attention to it; he seeks just to put it in chase, that he may run it down and have done with it.

“The Dissenters,” he says, “have their literature, not merely their divinity, but their review and their magazines apart. The ‘religious world,’ an expression which always causes in us a revulsive shudder at its uncharitable presumption, stamp all books, not with their ‘*imprimatur*,’ but their ‘legatur,’ in a spirit as severe and uncompromising as the Star Chamber of old, or the Holy Inquisition itself. The portion of our countrymen, which is called by that name, which we consider as opposite to true christian humility, comprehends also the more rigid part of the

* This Epitaph, like another eminent one, has omitted the name of the party. It is said that her name was *Coercion*, and that she was succeeded in her domiciliary rule by her daughter *Toleration*. Others prefer different explanations. We must leave the matter to the critic and antiquary.

Establishment: but even within this circle, the Dissenters have one still narrower, and indeed begin to have their authors on almost all subjects, who have the advantage that their works are bought with avidity, and secure the applause of a numerous herd of zealous partizans."

The Reviewer finds that a large proportion of his own Church, united with the Dissenters, pass under the denomination of the "religious world," an expression which always causes, in his humble and catholic mind, "a revulsive shudder." But how is it, good Mr. Editor, that these aguish symptoms are brought on by the force of this expression? Is it blasphemy? Is it sedition and privy conspiracy against our Lord the King? Are there not the "fashionable world," the "theatrical world," the "political world," and the "literary republic?" Does the Reviewer feel a "revulsive shudder" at the *exclusive* import of these expressions? How is it, then, that he shudders, like Belshazzar, at a few innocent letters crossing his eye but for a moment? Can it be that,

" He sees a hand we cannot see,
And hears a voice we cannot hear?"

Can it be that he is happily conscious of being able to establish a claim to a place in every other world; but that, if there is to be a

religious world, he is painfully conscious he must be liable to exclusion?

Indeed I can, in no other way, account for his being put into so much bodily fear by a trifling expression, deemed innocent in every other combination. For the phrase itself, I cannot see but that there must be an *expressed* distinction, when there is a *real* difference; and of the existence of such difference, I presume even the Reviewer will hardly indulge a doubt. There are evidently, among the various denominations of men, those who serve God, and those who do not; those who live in sin, and those who are resisting its power; those who are living for this world, and those who are living mainly for another;—here is an evident and most important difference; the one class is, in the proper sense of the term, religious, and the other is irreligious;—with the one class we are commanded to identify ourselves, from the other class we are commanded to come out and stand separate; and I fear lest those who “shudder” and hesitate, should be found with those who “are without,” and whose woe “slumbereth not.”

Within this invidious and narrow circle, the Dissenters have one yet narrower; and in this very narrow sphere, they have “their literature,

and begin to have their authors on almost all subjects." This announcement is made as a discovery, and with sensible alarm. The Dissenters have their literature, and begin to have their *authors*, and a numerous *herd* of readers! The gentle Reviewer is as much disturbed as if he had discovered one hundred thousand pike heads in the vaults of our conventicles. But then he is a literary man, and is therefore particularly sensitive on the subject of literature. 'The Dissenters,' he would say, 'have their divinity,—let them keep to that;—their fathers were content with it, let them walk in their steps,—What do they know of letters?—What right have they to interfere with the province of the "Quarterly," and to exalt themselves into censors and oracles over the literature of the day; a "revulsive shudder" comes over me when I think of such presumption.' But be a little patient, my dear Sir, I have "a whisper for your private ear," which may soothe you. Do you complain that we have our literature? Why, you remember how long you have complained that we had no literature; and now we have been striving to get some expressly to please you, you will hardly be angry with us in "real earnest," as the children say. Well, Sir, whether you will or not, we have our literature. The lions will soon be painters; and

then in your turn you may be gratified by sitting for your likeness.

The Reviewer, having been induced to name our literature, professes to give us a sketch of it. We have our advocates, our historians, our poets, our imaginative writers, and our review and magazines apart. The two last items in the account are not otherwise noticed, though it might perplex the Reviewer to find any thing in the "Quarterly" equal to some of the articles in the Review, either for critical acumen, fine taste, or general excellence. Of our advocates, Mr. Conder is named incidentally, and with the intention of showing, by a forced quotation, that as he has charged the Church with possessing too much wealth and worldliness, his whole treatise is one of intolerance; though few controversies have to boast of a calmer or more philosophical inquiry. Messrs. Bogue and Bennett are introduced for the purpose of supporting the same charge, without the admission of any thing in their favour. Of our poets, only one, Mr. Montgomery, has made "any great impression;" and of our imaginative writers, who have sought to consecrate the fancy to nature and piety, only the Taylor family, and Mr. Reed, are named; the one for cold praise, and the other to derive a prejudiced conclusion,

which proves the Reviewer to be speaking of a case of which he is actually ignorant.*

And, in a professed notice of the literature of the Dissenters, this is literally the amount of what the Reviewer thinks it necessary to state! Some five or six names are mentioned, and they are all that need be mentioned; and most of them are named to be disparaged, and none to be treated as it deserves. And yet this Reviewer talks of the "religious world," stamping all books with their "legatur," in a spirit as severe as the Star Chamber or Holy Inquisition! Can the severe spirit of the Dissenters, or that of the Inquisition itself, be equal to the injustice and prejudice of the "Quarterly?" When have the works of Dis-

* I do not mean to assert, that the temper discovered in the "History of Dissent," is entirely unexceptionable; on the contrary, I think with very many, that the worthy authors, by their sympathy with the sufferings of our early fathers, have departed from the sobriety and impartiality which the dignity of history demands. Nor do I write as the champion of Mr. Reed. He has shown he can defend his own cause. But it is manifest, that the Reviewer has not seen his reply. He admits, that the attack is "outrageous;" it is generally admitted, the defence is temperate and to the purpose; these circumstances are some guide to a decision. It is singular, that no greater pains have been taken to circulate a pamphlet so calculated to answer its end.

senters received a fair and generous examination, irrespective of the sin of their having renounced good benefices, and declared their independence? When have they been regarded at all, except, as in the present instance, in the sub-section of a vituperative essay against the rights of conscience and of Englishmen? Nothing professing a literary character can be more exclusive than this Review. It has a prescribed standard of politics and ecclesiastical discipline, and whatever does not arise to it, is either doomed to oblivion, or branded as false and worthless altogether. It has a test of even stricter limitation than this; as far as can be, it is obliged *write up* whoever does, and to *write down* whoever does not, publish with Mr. Murray. The correspondence of Lord Byron has thrown some disastrous light on this subject.

I must yet offer one remaining observation on our literature. The Reviewer uniformly speaks of what he styles *our* literature, with such emphasis as to imply, that we have no claim on any except the portion furnished by Dissenters. Now, I may not be, possibly, so great an adept as himself, in the subtle, but all-important doctrine of the *meum* and *tuum*; yet I do mean to maintain, that, besides the literature which we call our own, we have an

equal interest with others in the common literature of the country. Are not Pope and Addison, Locke and Bacon, Boyle and Newton, as much mine as they can be the Reviewer's? If I do not participate in the stores they can impart, it must be because I am *self-excluded*; none other can prevent my lawful enjoyment of them. But the Dissenters do not exclude themselves. Their list of '*livres défendus*,' contrary to the assertion of the Reviewer, would only proscribe whatever is destructive of true piety and morality; this done, the whole field of literature is open to their possession. They listen freely to the words of science and wisdom, whether they are emitted from the lips of a churchman or non-conformist; they read the "*Quarterly*" as readily as the "*Edinburgh*," and both as willingly as the "*Eclectic*." Their liberality gives them a decided advantage;—their reading is more general, and their knowledge more correct;—they possess the literature of the nation, equally with others; and, through the prejudices of others, they possess nearly the exclusive interest in their own literature.

We now attend the Reviewer to another head of discussion, which we shall dispose of in as few words as possible. It is the

“reflected interest,” and advantage, the Dissenters derive from the sufferings of their forefathers. Yes; we verily have some advantage in this circumstance. Our fathers laboured to propagate the principles of religious freedom; they have struggled to defend them; they have bled to confirm them; and their blood is the seed of their church. We have an earnest sympathy with these men, and should be unworthy to succeed them if we had not. We have sat on the paternal knee, and listened to the story of their persecutions; we have perused their memoirs, and gazed upon their likenesses, till they have been bedewed by our infantile tears, and almost identified with our sensible relationships. And who shall deprive us of these mournful gratifications? Surely, if our fathers have endured peril, nakedness and sword, for the protection of their children; we may be allowed, unmolested, to enjoy the silent consolation of thinking, that being called to suffer, they suffered nobly, and have hallowed every privilege, we now quietly possess, by the shedding of their blood.

But no;—such are the benign influences of party spirit, that the Reviewer would rob us of this last consolation of the oppressed. He thinks no army of martyrs “*glorious*”

but his *own*; and he has no interest in the unyielding integrity, exalted piety, and sublime devotedness of any man, except as it may benefit *himself*. With his contracted perceptions, he cannot see that any good arises to him from these angelic qualities, if found in the Dissenters; and, therefore, he prepares to lay on them his desecrating hand.

His argument, "if argument it be, which reason hath none," would show, in the first instance, that the Dissenters were not more oppressed than others. How this can improve their case I know not. The burden of another certainly does not lighten my burden. There are, indeed, some selfish spirits, that, like the Reviewer, can find consolation beneath their sufferings, from the calamity of others; but the Dissenters have not yet acquired the secret of mitigating their wrongs, by dwelling complacently on the wrongs done to the Episcopalian or Presbyterian.

But, he urges, the Independents, equally with others, were oppressors in their turn, and all are rather to be blamed than pitied.

"We forget," he observes, "that persecution was considered by all parties as a duty; that all were alike fierce, merciless, and intolerant." No; we cannot have forgotten this, for we never knew it; and we expressly deny

its truth. That at this early period, they may have had their fanatics ; that persecution may have made some of their leaders or followers mad ; that religious liberty may have been in some cases unwisely blended with political rights ; we are prepared to admit ; but to argue from these occurrences, would be to convert the exception into the rule. Separate from these exceptions, we mean distinctly to assert, that the true principles of religious liberty were first generated in the lap of Independency ; that they were, for the first time, partially recognized by the government of this country, when the voice of Independency was partially regarded ; and that they have, to the present day, been either progressive or retrograde, as the Dissenters have exerted more or less influence in the nation. Moreover, we venture on the declaration, that the representations of the Reviewer, as well as what he calls Mr. Southey's "damning tale," and to which, "by some unaccountable error in judgment, they have omitted their authority," are made in the very teeth of sound historical testimony.

The Reviewer, after insinuating that our fathers were not more oppressed than oppressing, and calling in the authority of Mr. Southey, who has omitted all authority, to

his aid, proceeds with his ordinary consistency to allow, that they were comparatively oppressed; only he earnestly deprecates our sympathy on that account. "Giving them credit," he says, "for the fortitude with which they bore, what we will not scruple to call, oppression, nothing can be more absurd than the conclusion, that the present race of Dissenters are to receive the benefit of our sympathy." Yes, Mr. Editor, craving pardon, there is just *one* thing that would be more absurd than *giving* this sympathy, and that is, *withholding* it. But what a doctrine is this to issue from a high aristocratical quarter! Does not the inheritance, Sir, descend from the father to his son through manifold generations? And is not this the course of things you are labouring to uphold? Beware then of an evil precedent in the case of the Dissenters. Our fathers have left us an inheritance—not of their titles, but their example,—not their treasures, but their tears;—their name stands high in the brilliant scroll of martyrology, it has a holy dwelling in the memory of the wise and good,—and he who shall seek to alienate it from us, will but justify the title by which we retain it for ever!

Then, finally, if sympathy must be given, we are to see that it is confined within due

limits. "Unquestionably," he says, "the lineal descendants of the three denominations, with the Quakers, (by much the smaller body, we apprehend, of the Dissenters,) are *alone* entitled to this inheritance of public interest from the distress of their founders." A very necessary precaution this in defining so valuable a privilege! Be it known, therefore, to ye Methodists, whether Calvinistic or Wesleyan, and ye non-descripts of every complexion, that the world, and the Church, and the Reviewer, owe ye no sympathy whatever, for your fathers, instead of suffering oppression for conscience sake as in duty bound, were aiding and abetting to flay and burn the king's subjects; they can only conscientiously sympathize with the "three denominations, and the Quakers" making a fourth. And be it farther known to these four denominations themselves, that this inheritance of sympathy cannot be bestowed on them but as they shall, each one for himself, show, that they are the lineal offspring of some one individual who was ejected, or branded, or tortured, or burnt; and even this case of oppression must be proved to have arisen *after* the reign of Mary, and *before* that of the Brunswicks, as before this period, the indemnifying parties do not consider themselves responsible, and after it

they cannot admit there has been any persecution. So let every Dissenter away to his genealogical tree; and if he is so happy as to make out a case of descent as incontestably as that of the Virgin Mary from the loins of Abraham, let him convey it to Albemarle Street without delay, and I doubt not but he shall have full enjoyment of his right by patent for nine hundred and ninety-nine years, should he live so long to need it.

Now observe how prettily this argument has been conducted. Here are its propositions; our fathers deserve *no pity*, because they were oppressors in their turn;—they may be the subjects of *pity*, but it is absurd therefore to sympathize with their *descendants*,—we may sympathize with those Dissenters who are *really* their descendants, but we must be careful not to extend it to others who have no claim to it! However, I am not on the whole displeased with the evident *aim* of the Reviewer; he sees, like Macbeth, that he has blood on his hands, and is anxious to wash it off,—but it is there still, and “will not come off.”

“There is yet,” says the Reviewer, “one more cause which we wish to touch with the utmost delicacy, but which we cannot conscientiously omit. It is the system

adopted by some of the clerical body themselves, whose zeal we admire, whose conscientious discharge of duty is worthy of every praise."

This is addressed to the "evangelical Clergy," and in the Reviewer's most gracious manner. As a Dissenter, I have to thank his conscience for touching on this delicate subject, as it will assist me to his real sentiments on two points, which he has thrown into discussion. The first is, the comparative independence of the teachers in the two churches. He has urged that the church necessarily makes the pastor independent, and that our system as necessarily makes him subservient. I shall content myself in confronting the two-fold description with which he favours us; it will sufficiently show that if our teachers are *not* independent, Episcopacy, by putting the election beyond the voice of the people, does not supply a *remedy*.

The Dissenting Pastor
is thus described:

"He is in *no* respect an *independent* teacher of religion, he is the stipendiary expositor of the opinions of *others*. Such a system must

The Clergyman
thus:

"What we principally object to in the system adopted by these excellent men, is the *want of independence*, the too great sub-

lead to pride and self-sufficiency in the congregation; in the preacher, to *abject subserviency*."

ordination of their own conduct to the *judgment of others*. They are not *teachers*, but they condescend to be *taught*. The people, having been accustomed to great deference from one pastor, will rigidly exact it from his successor; having been taught to listen not as learners, but as *judges*."

The remaining particular relates to the *influence* which has been exerted by the various Acts and Tests of Uniformity. After the numerous and even criminal sacrifices that have been made to them, it becomes a matter of interest to know what good they have produced. That they have expelled multitudes of the best ministers the Church ever possessed, cannot be disputed; but, in bringing this evil, have they brought a corresponding good? Certainly not. There are, at this moment, more varied and essential differences within the Church, where these Tests are in full authority, than there are among the considerable classes of Dissenters, whose congregations reject all foreign controul. There are not merely the distinctions of orthodox and evangelical Clergy; but there are, in the ministers and members of Episcopacy, every

shade of opinion and of creed. There are the high Calvinist and the low,—the Antinomian, sentimental and metaphysical,—the Arminian of ancient and modern times,—the Unitarian, in his Protean shapes of Arianism, Socinianism and Sabellianism,—the semi-deist, the rational divine, and the free-thinker,—the papist, the mystic, and the Southcottonian,—

“But names should sooner fail,
Than cause for name.”

All these classes, so different in creed and character, are brought into one community, while the Dissenter, who cordially approves the doctrines of the Church, and objects only to her discipline, is rigidly excluded. The practical tendency, therefore, of all the legislation, on the subject of uniformity, has been, to confound the important with the unimportant,—to invert the order of a sentiment, which, for its wisdom, has become an aphorism among us—by demanding “in things indifferent,” unity, and by granting “in things necessary,” liberty. It was remarked of the King of Prussia, in the late war, that he had taste in the uniform of his soldiers, but none in the tactics of the field; so the Church has been rigid in external conformity, but has been

negligent of truths and principles; she has raised before us an imposing and colossal figure, but, like that in the prophecies, it is composed of incongruous materials, — clay, iron, brass, and gold,—its bulk is its weakness, the higher its elevation the more hazardous its standing.

Having traversed the mazes of the Reviewer's argument, we now arrive at his inferences, which are any thing but *inferential*. His first and grand inference from the entire discussion, is, that, "on the whole, the Church is most admirably adapted to the circumstances of the country." A very *desirable* conclusion, undoubtedly; but on what premises is it actually resting? On none other than the *advantages* of the Dissenters over the Church! His proposition is, that the Church is labouring beneath great comparative *disadvantages*; his inference is, therefore the Church is *admirably adapted* to the people! He has shown that our places of worship are better *adapted* to the comfort and accommodation of the worshippers; that our periods of worship are more sagaciously *adapted* to the habits of the people; that our teachers are decidedly more *adapted* to be heard and understood than those of the Church; and that our system of doctrine is much more *adapted* to the general

mind, as it is not composed, like that of the Church, of "nice and subtle distinctions," but of "broad and strongly traced" truths, which are "clear and definite." He urges, that, with no benefices, our plans have more *adaptation* to provide comfortably for our pastors, that they are more *adapted* to call forth the energies of the human character; and equally well *adapted* to provide suitable places of worship as they are needed, since they have furnished as many, in a given number of years, as the Church is likely to supply in as many ages.

And yet this incomparable Reviewer tumbles down as plumply, and with as much *naivete* as possible, on the conclusion,—that the Church is on the whole the *most admirably adapted* for the country! I remember a Right Honourable Secretary not long since opposed a proposition for Reform, by attempting to show that the machinery of the Commons' House "*worked well*;" and, that, therefore, on the whole, it was well *adapted* to the circumstances of the country; but here is a pleader "abler far," who, at Oxford, or elsewhere, has found out a "royal road" to logic; for he insists, that whatever the Church may boast, its system *does not* "*work well*;" and then infers, that it is *best adapted* to the people.

An eminent Italian professor, who was the subject of that modesty which waits on genius, was once listening to a pupil who was making such “sweet discord,” and looking such sweet complacency while she did it, that he involuntarily exclaimed, “*I wish, Miss, I had your assurance!*”

In the closing paragraph, the Reviewer seeks to be very consolatory. However he may have winced, and whined, and blustered in the under-part of the little scene in which he has acted, he would end it with a grace,—if he must make his exit, he would do it as Cæsar did,—like a *gentleman*. The Dissenters, he has no doubt, think well of the Church,—the Church must endeavour to think well of herself,—Dissent is as variable as the weather,—the Church is permanently the same;—if she should be in danger, her Articles will support her,—if she should become “indolent and lukewarm,” her Formularies will revive and warm her,—her cause is good, better, best,—she will be maintained as she deserves, in her dignity as well as usefulness.

Well, Mr. Editor, we have no objection to have it said, that we think well of the Church. We do think well, exceedingly well, of whatever within her pale is wise, and pious, and devoted, and scriptural; we only object to

her frailties and faults ; and no good Churchman would desire us to say more. That she has been useful we admit ; that she may be abundantly more so, by her exertions at home, and influence abroad, we eagerly desire. What may contribute to her real dignity and welfare we readily allow ; and even where change may seem to us most desirable, we would not ask it from any source except the *calm, deliberate, concurrent* opinion of the *nation*.

But seriously, if the Church is to maintain her dignity and usefulness, as the Reviewer predicts, it must not be by following *his* prescriptions. He says, the Church has the protection of her creeds ; and then contrasts her state with the decay of the old Presbyterians, as if *they* were strangers to creeds and catechisms, and leagues and covenants ! Then he says, enrich the benefices of the Church ; as if her wealth had not already made her a snare and a prey to worldly minds, whom no creeds can bind, and no sanctions terrify. Then he insists, that the Church has suffered mainly by her superior liberality ; and that she can only meet her adversaries in equal strife, by assuming a more menacing attitude. Vile nostrums all ! which, if they are meant to be toothsome to the patient, would infallibly aggravate the

disease. He either *cannot* or *may not* touch on the real necessities of the case.

Hear then the truth; and though from a Dissenter, yet not from an enemy. Let the Church lower herself something from her aristocratical elevation, and put herself on a closer footing of intercourse with the people. Let her nobly renounce for herself the anti-protestant pretensions to divine rights, legitimate succession, and the power to decree rites and ceremonies; and the equally papistical and overstrained reliance upon creeds and formularies. Let her at last, without reservation and without addition, avow that the Holy Scriptures alone are our guide and authority; and that she has no power, except to accomplish their plain and literal instructions.

Let her relinquish her vain dream of antiquity,—death and sin are more antique than she,—lest she should be found *antiquated* in the end. Let her shape her services, not according to the ritual of the Old Testament, which has “vanished away,” but after the directions of the New Testament which “continueth for ever.” Let her carry forward the work of the great Reformers as they commanded; and obliterate from her formularies those corruptions which are derived from the

Romish superstition. Let her disclaim her right *by any voice of scripture*, to the enjoyment of tithes, and let her commute her conventional right for a fair and honourable remuneration. Let her adapt herself as much as may be to the manners and customs of the people; let nothing be bound on the consciences of her followers, which God hath not bound; and let her not insult those beyond her community, by pretending to yield them the benefits of Toleration.—Toleration! the power to tolerate involves the power to withhold toleration,—and we deny both to any Church under heaven.

Instead of craving more wealth, let it be understood, that the safety of the Church is in her comparative poverty. Let her be jealous of worldly patronage, as of the plague. Let the benefices be equalized; and let them be disposed of, not at the clamour of interest, or the bribe of gold, but to men of sound worth and pastoral character. Let the man who *actually* takes the care of souls, have the attached reward; and let us have no longer the disgraceful contrast of the luxurious incumbent, and the starved curate. Let the energies of the people be elicited towards their Church; let their offers of supplying local accommodation be met on a liberal footing;

and let them hold a sanative *veto* on the appointment of their spiritual instructors.

Let us hear no more of the nonsense of baptismal regeneration, and salvation by the mere performance of sacraments. Give us less of Bellarmine and the Fathers, and more of the Apostles ; less of Seneca, and more of Christ. Talk not, at this date of the world, about "legitimate ordination," "the sin of schism," and exclusive privilege ; preach the gospel in all the latitude of its chartered mercies, and all the force of its unutterable obligations. As your ministers have to speak, see that they *can* speak ; as they have to pray, see that they are "men of prayer ;" and as they have to persuade, see that they themselves are persuaded of the truths to which they would win others. Let the Church especially see that her ministers are in earnest,—deeply in earnest. Let her renounce those lifeless, school-boy, automaton services, which may make the witness of them an hypocrite, possibly an infidel, hardly a Christian ; and let us have the heart-stirring truths of our redemption announced with corresponding feeling. Let her ministers be men who stand in the counsel of the Most High ; who are raised at once by the nobility of christian principle above the influence of honour or wealth ; and who are

possessed with the richest charity to man. Let them be men, not of this world, but another; breathing of heaven while on earth; and who, in making their pilgrimage through this vale of tears, are chiefly concerned, that themselves, and those in their guidance, may safely reach the celestial,—the eternal City!

This, Sir, is my remedy for the evils with which the Church is now “oppressed;” and if it shall be applied, I make myself responsible for its efficacy. Her “flesh shall return as the flesh of a little child;” she shall be green in old age; she shall stand as high in excellence as in station; she shall be blessed, and shall be a blessing; and the Dissenter, if Dissenter there then shall be, shall be among the foremost in a generous exultation in her improvement and felicity. But my remedy is not *palatable*, and I fear, though there is life in it, on that account it will be rejected; besides, it is presented by a non-conformist, and who would accept of health or life from illegitimate hands? Well, I wish she would try it, I am sure it would do her good!

I have now nothing remaining for observation, except the *professions* of the Reviewer, in the management of his subject. No man can complain in being tried on his own professions; and the Reviewer less than any

one, since he has so explicitly and ostentatiously placed them on the head of his essay. His first profession is, that he will discuss *principles*; “our views,” he says, “are general, and will not descend to particular cases; we discuss the *principles* of different systems, not the acts of individuals.” Now, Sir, is it not palpably evident that this review is any thing rather than a *discussion of principles*? Is it not made up of particular allusions, loose assertions, invidious comparisons? The subject under his hand was the progress of Dissent;—to treat it as he professes, he must have brought forward the principles on which Episcopacy is grounded, and those on which the Dissenter rests his cause, for strict, but fair examination. But there is scarcely a distinct reference to the principles of either Church. This Reviewer having chosen Dissent as a popular article to write upon, for the benefit of the “Quarterly,” had, no doubt, a right to choose his *mode* of treating it; but he could have no right to flatter the prejudiced reader, and to delude the careless one, by introducing a gross discrepancy between his pretensions and performance. He did not *mean* to discuss principles; he knew that the “periodical” for which he was writing, did not dare engage in a calm and honest inquiry on the broad

principles of Dissent. There have been innumerable philippics in that work against the Dissenters; but there has been nothing approximating to a free examination of their principles.

The simple mention of some of our elementary principles will be sufficient to show that these assertions are correct. They are these:—that God has endowed man with a rational and conscious existence;—that to guide his opinions, and his worship, he has bestowed on him a revelation which is amply sufficient to instruct him in what he ought to believe, and what he ought to do;—that he is separately and absolutely to judge for himself of the contents of this revelation, and is at perfect liberty to profess those opinions, and offer that worship which he conceives it to enjoin;—that, as far as these are *religious* rights, they are not conventional, not prescriptive, not alienable; that they are therefore not cognizable by civil or ecclesiastical power; and that the man, or body of men, who shall venture to controul the religious faith and worship of any one, by ignominious tests and privations, are guilty of arrogating the judgment of the Most High; and of persecuting a being, who, equally with themselves, is endowed with the right of judging for himself, and is made responsible to his Maker alone!

We maintain, — that a company of “faithful men,” assembling together in one place for the worship of God, is a church ;—that this church so assembled, has the right of electing its own officers, temporal and spiritual ; that it has the power of admission or of exclusion ; but that the whole of its power is *executive*, enforcing *only* those rules which are clearly developed in the New Testament. That such an assembly of persons with its chosen officers, is a complete church within itself ; that it can acknowledge no *extraneous* authority ; nor can it exercise any over other similar assemblies of persons ;—and that consequently each church, collectively, has an unquestioned right to profess its faith, and present its worship in the presence of all who may voluntarily unite with it, without the least interference of *political* power, unless these rights shall be abused, to injure the body *politic*.

This, Mr. Editor, is a slight sketch of the principles on which we rest our cause. I acknowledge that I look on them with calmness and confidence. I challenge you to a candid and manly examination of them ; and I promise that if you, or the best man of your critical club will fairly try them by any legitimate mode of argument, and demonstrate

their fallacy, *then* I will be a Churchman. I, at least, am not a Dissenter because my father was one; nor because I am smitten with its temporal honours and rewards; nor because I find any satisfaction in differing from my brethren of mankind. I desire to know the truth, and knowing it, to embrace it, cost what it may. If Dissent is only the nursling of political discontent, the sophism of weak headed enthusiasts, the unwholesome gangrene of the benevolent affections,—then let it perish! But if it is the child of truth, and the parent of liberty, and the friend of piety, beware lest in resisting it, you may haply fight against God!

Another *profession* of the Reviewer is, that he shall meet the discussion in the spirit of charity. “*Above all*,” he says, “we shall study to observe that spirit of charity, which, as it will not condescend to the restraint of fear, lest it should offend by declaring the whole truth, will study to express that truth in a manner which ought to give no offence whatever.” This is his profession. Now, for the performance. In this essay, so truly devoted to calm and philosophical inquiry, and in which, if truth is stated, it is to be stated in the most conciliatory manner, we are indulged with the following expressions: — *Dissent* is a

“feud,” “a disorder,” “a narrow sect,” a “blind fanaticism; and, in “many places,” a “commercial and pecuniary speculation.” Dissent is “the spirit of party,”—the “sectarianism of the day;” its “principle is exclusive privilege;”—its “life is proselytism;” its “life-blood is detraction from the Clergy;” its “vital principle is disunion;” (plenty of the *vital* principle by the bye;) and “difference of opinion is at a premium.” Dissenting *places* of worship are “conventicles,” “brick barns;” —“hideous;”—“unsightly.” Dissenting *pastors* are “preachers of conventicles;” “no way independent;” “stipendiary expositors of the opinions of others;” and their “principle is to accommodate their doctrine to the humour and prejudice of their hearers.” Their preaching consists of “dogmatic assertion,”—“exaggerated pretension,” —“an appeal to passion and conceit;” and, “perhaps, amounts to the wildest enthusiasm, or the most gloomy fanaticism.” And the “*low* preachers exhibit the fate of Dives, not merely without commiseration, but with sensations of fierce and bitter triumph, to justify the poor in their hatred of the opulent!” The *system* of Dissent is described by the detested French phrase, *surveillance*; it is a “rigid jealousy of separation among separatists;” it “enchains and

enslaves the weak mind ;” “ the *weakest minds* may, without difficulty, dissent from the Church ; but it “ requires *no little strength of character* to dissent from the Dissenters.” The *mass* of *Dissenters* is composed of the “ middle class,” more likely to be led astray than either the upper or lower classes ! They are influenced by advantages and motives not of a spiritual, but “ a worldly” nature, “ petty ambition,” “ management of funds,” “ voice at elections,” “ pride of surveillance,” “ brief authority,” and “ self-importance ;” these motives have made Dissenters, rather than conscientious objections to any thing in the services or ministers of the Church !” And, after all, the Reviewer’s temper is not to be estimated from these separated expressions. In being isolated from their connexion they lose their sting ; and even in their places they do not yield the adequate proof. The spirit of the whole is discoverable, not by a few violent phrases, but mainly by that supercilious contempt, that insinuated misrepresentation, that malignant slander, which lives through every sentence, and every paragraph.

Yet all this is done and said in “ the spirit of charity !” — with “ perfect impartiality !” — in a “ conscientious horror of infringing, in the least, on the great commandment which for-

bids to bear false witness!" — and "with a studious concern to express truth, in such a manner, as ought not to give offence!" Sir, I have no patience with this sub-human hypocrisy! If a man has an itching to attack Dissent and Dissenters, let him say so; and let him do it in open day, and with fair weapons; but let him not pretend to pledge me in a poisoned cup, nor desecrate the tokens of friendship by making them the snares of hostility! Talk of charity! — impartiality! — inoffensiveness! — Thou pretty deceiver, how plausible thou art! Thou hast a fascinating eye; thou hast a smooth tongue; thou art fair spoken, and canst talk sweetly of charity, and liberty, and the knowledge of good and evil. Thou art very innocent; for nothing is under that soft tongue but—poison. Thou art very harmless; for nothing is in thine eye but—death. And even in death thou art merciful; for, if thy victims must die, thou deliverest them from the anguish of death by beguiling them of their fears! Thou beautiful creature! — thou dost never hiss when thou art about to bite! Thou canst insinuate an anathema on the separatist, in professing to intercede for the Church, and all so inoffensively! Thou canst seem any thing but—evil; and, be any thing but—good!

I have finally to remark upon one other *profession*, which is maintained, not merely in this article, but generally by the Review; it is the superior correctness and elegance of its style. The excellency of the work, in this particular, is insinuated, or asserted, in every number which appears; and partly on this account, but principally because occasional articles are introduced, which, by their careful and admirable composition, seem to justify the claim, it is approved and read as a truly classical performance. This very celebrity, however, makes it the more important that it should be read with an eye open equally to its defects and to its beauties, lest the public taste should be corrupted in the very act of seeking refinement. My present business is with the article before me; and, unhappily, I have not much to say in its favour as a composition. You shall judge, Mr. Editor, for yourself; I will merely submit to you those passages which have met my observation, when going over the paragraph for other purposes. They are as follows:—

“It is not always easy to discriminate the *modern Independents*, who have preserved the congregational form of worship and the same meeting-houses ever since the time of Cromwell, from *those* of the Methodists.”

A loose and incorrect sentence. He means to connect the meeting-houses of the Methodists and Independents ; but he *really* says, it is not easy to discriminate the *Independents* from the *meeting-houses* of the Methodists. I never knew that an Independent Dissenter was like a Methodist meeting-house.

“The great *accession* to the body of Dissenters has been *among* the followers of Whitfield and Wesley.”

Query.—How can an accession to one party be *among* the followers of another party ? This is saying in coming to A I remain with B. It should have been *from*, not *among*.

—— “A justification of open *attack against* the negligence,” &c.

Attack and *against*, are both expressive of opposition. The phrase is superfluous. It should be *attack on*, &c.

“The appeal to parliament for assistance is only a new proof, not of the zeal of the clerical body, but *for an extension* of their own patronage.”

This is nonsense. To make it agree in construction, it should be *of an extension*. Still it would not be *sense*. Read it then ;—*but of a desire to extend*, &c.

“Our object is to show that it has been the natural consequence of *circumstances*, over which, the Clergy, as a

body, could have no controul; *which*, as they could not counteract, *is not* to be imputed to them, as a criminating charge; *which* lastly affords," &c.

A very bad sentence. I have read it over several times, and can hardly tell what the Reviewer *meant* to say. I must leave the meaning, and content myself with correcting the syntax. The last two relative pronouns must belong to *circumstances*, and circumstances must have, *are not*, instead of *is not*, to agree with it. This is right in grammar, but wrong in sense.

"——: the wicked condemnation of the whole body, for the sins of a *few* among its *members*."

A *few* what? It should have been a few of its members.

"We detest that spirit which would make the general body of Dissenting teachers odious, on account of the profligate, who may have assumed *that character* for the furtherance of their vices."

Query.—What *character*? The character of a general body of Dissenting teachers? It is indistinct, and should have been of Dissenting teachers *generally*, or *as a body*.

"It is only for want of information, or attention, that the public in this country is *mised*: it may have its *paroxysms* of passion, or its obstinate *lethargy* of prejudice; but *good*

sense is sure at last to predominate, to calm the transient irritation, and remove the pertinacious obstruction."

This is very *pretty*; but it would be more so, if it were not made up of *broken* figures. The public it seems is easily *mised*; but what have paroxysm and lethargy to do with a man's being *led out of the way*? And if *paroxysms*, and even *lethargy*, come on us, how is *good sense* the cure for them? For my part, I had rather, much rather, have a good *physician*.

"New towns have sprung up with the rapidity, and under the same agency, as that building which is said," &c.

It should be with the rapidity *of*, and under the same agency, as that, &c.

"The promptitude with which the earliest opportunity was seized to devote a considerable sum to *this purpose*, the establishment of the Society for *the enlarging* churches, supported with great munificence, and the parliamentary grant of the last Session, *guarantee* as well the estimation in which the Church of England is held, as the serious conviction of the paramount necessity of *such measures*."

A heavy sentence. For *the enlarging churches*, read, *the enlargement of churches*. For *guarantee*, read *discover*; guarantee refers to *security for the future*, and this is not his meaning.

“In many places the Clergy have not only to *compete* with the fair opposition of religious zeal, but with the interested *spirit of pecuniary speculation*.”

This sentence *expresses* that the Clergyman has to *compete with* or *rival* the Dissenter in the spirit of pecuniary speculation. This he does not *intend* to say. Read *contend* for *compete*, and we shall have his meaning.

“In many towns the *dissenting meeting-house involves considerations*, at least, as worldly as spiritual.”

This is curious. The *meeting-house* has doubtless many excellencies; but I did not know, that it was endowed with a faculty of *intelligence* and *consideration*. A meeting-house may certainly involve a preacher, and a congregation, and pews, and benches; but how *it* can involve *consideration* is the difficulty. Read the *erection* or *support* of Dissenting meeting-houses, &c.

“In a large parish in a town, the gradual secession may elude observation, and escape the expostulation of the Clergyman.”

I say nothing of the elegance of the first phrase in this sentence,—*in a large parish in a town*, only that it is very like, Johnny went up the hill, and Johnny came down; but

what is to be said of *expostulation* with a *secession*. We may expostulate with *seceders*, but furthermore the deponent saith not.

“To dissent from a *body* of Dissenters requires no little strength of character; to resist the crimination of the *whole body*; jealous, at least, for the interest of their sect, if not conscientiously convinced that salvation is not to be obtained out of *its pale*.”

We must pass over the inelegance of this construction. Here are a *body* of Dissenters, and then a *whole body*,—pray, what is the difference? If I say, that I have a *whole body*, do I mean that I have more than a man who has a *body*? Or does the Reviewer mean that the Dissenters are indulged with *two* bodies? Then there is, the *whole body*, jealous of the interest of *their sect*. What is the body? And what the sect? If they are united, does the sect include the body, or the body the sect? As for *number*, it is sadly mangled; the Reviewer has been balancing his pen between the singular and plural. There is first a *body*; then there is, *their* sect of this body, and finally, there is *its pale*,—that is, the *pale* of the *body*!

“The spontaneous growth of that *soil* and *atmosphere* which are found in the *chapels* of Dissenters.”

This short clause of a sentence is rich in blunders. Can we properly speak of the *growth* of an *atmosphere*? Can we say, that an *atmosphere* is *in* a place? Thirdly, what shall we do with, *the soil* which is found *in* our chapels? A garden or a field has *its soil*; but I had to learn that a chapel has *its soils* likewise. Perhaps the Reviewer thinks the floor or pavement of our chapels is in similar condition to the head of a French stage coach, on which I have literally seen the grass grow and luxuriate.

“It is no longer an *inveterate* hereditary malady, but a *transitory* disorder, from the *contagion* of which, the *nearest* relatives escape.”

I wish to know, what the *contagion* of a disease has to do with its being either *transitory* or *inveterate*. Surely a fever is not the less contagious, because it remains in my house a *month*, and not a *twelve-month*? He confounds *quality* with *time*. Then again, if *contagious*, who do the *nearest* relatives escape? Why should my *son* escape rather than my *brother*, or my *daughter* rather than my *niece*? Pray, Mr. Editor, tell me why?

“The feud is not *now* handed down from sire to son with all the cherished rancour of many generations, &c.; *but*

the falling off and desertion of the *second* generation *is not so much incumbered* with difficulties."

Very badly written. There is a confusion of *time*. The feud *is not now* cherished as it was; and the *second generation*, therefore, *will not be* incumbered with difficulty. Again, the desertion of the second generation *is not*; he is speaking of the future,—it should be *will not*. Lastly, he employs the conjunction, *but*, improperly; to give his meaning, it should be *therefore*.

"—— Enrolled themselves in the list of contributors and members of the conventicle."

A vulgar, and with this writer, a common fault, in the omission of the preposition. It should be,—in the list of *contributors to*, '&c.

"It is inconceivable how great difficulties are thrown in the way of the Clergy, by old prescriptive rights," &c.

I cannot apprehend the import of—*how great difficulties*. Is it meant to express wonder at the difficulties as great beyond conception; or the *manner* in which the difficulties have been thrown in the way? These difficulties *are thrown* in the way *by* old prescriptive rights. I can conceive of old prescriptive rights *being thrown* in the way as

difficulties; but, really, I cannot conceive of old prescriptive rights *throwing* difficulties in the way, though I know they are a very *powerful* sort of thing.

“We cannot take upon ourselves to decide upon the *wisest course* to be pursued by the Clergy in this respect, as the prudence of the plan must entirely depend on local circumstances. But where the accommodation to the public wishes is feasible, we should conceive, that the advantage will *preponderate*; and, accordingly we know, that *the practice* has been adopted with very great success.”

Will *preponderate*—to *what*? *The practice*,—*what* practice? He has been speaking of *two* practices; and he says, he cannot tell which is the *wisest*; and *we* cannot tell which he would favour, but as we *infer* it from the tenor of the sentences.

“The evening service is the period at which they meet with the greatest success, and strive to make their services and their *pulpits* most *acceptable* to the *taste* of their hearers, and most *adapted* to the securing their *influence*.”

What has evening *service* to do with *period*? What has *period* to do with *at which*? *Period* here, does not refer to *motion*, but to *time*; and not to a *point* of time, but to *time continuously*; it should be *in which*. Moreover, how can *pulpits* be acceptable to the *taste* of people? I dare

say, most people would find a haunch of venison more *acceptable* to their *taste*, than a few mahogany or deal *planks*. How, again, can a *pulpit* be *adapted* to secure *influence*? If this secret in carpentry can be actually discovered, it should be instantly applied; for there are many pulpits perishing in very need of it. But I fear it will be found in good grammar, that a *pulpit* is *only adapted* to hold a *preacher*.

“It is in vain to *detect* the *grossness* of *exaggeration* which is as greedily *swallowed* as it is undauntedly *asserted*.”

A very neat antithetical sentence. Nevertheless it must not pass “without question.” What has *detect* to do with *grossness*? I can *detect* a *subtlety*, (provided it is not too subtle;) but the *grossness* of a thing makes *detection unnecessary*, or *impossible*. Then this *grossness* of *exaggeration* is first to be *asserted*, and afterwards *swallowed*. Well, the Reviewer may, perhaps, be able to *assert* an *exaggeration*, and then *swallow it*; but I fear it will plague him in the *digestion*.

“He has but to *impose* upon the minds of his congregation by *talent*, or the *appearance* of it.”

I say nothing of the *he has but*, except that

it is one of the elegancies of this writer. But how can a man *impose* on other men *by talent*? He may by the *appearance* of it; surely not by the *thing itself*. It would be saying, that a *man* imposes on me, by *appearing as a man*; no, no,—let him come in the form of a *woman*, and he may possibly succeed.

“ — before its *spirit* and its *form* had become *obsolete* among them.”

This is the first time I have heard of a *spirit* becoming *obsolete*. I know that a *custom*, a *law*, or a *language* may become *obsolete*, but it perplexes me to comprehend, how this can be said of a *spirit*; perhaps the writer held in his eye a poetical allusion to the *ghosts* and *witches* of former days, and who have now *disappeared* from among us.

“The *portion* of our countrymen, which is called by that name, comprehends also the most rigid part of the Establishment; but even within *this circle*, the Dissenters have one still *narrower*, and indeed begin to have their *authors*,” &c.

Pray, Mr. Editor, try to conceive of a *narrow circle*. Mind, it must not be of *equal diameter* at all points; but much longer than it is wide, that it may be *narrow*. And then you have, what? any thing but a *circle*.

Farther, how can we be sure that “a given

portion of our countrymen" form a *circle*? You might bring them into a *ring* certainly; but even then, I fear, they would not make a *circle*. Finally, if you should happily convert those *scattered, angular* beings, the Dissenters, into a *compact circle*, what has their being a *circle* to do with their *beginning* to have *authors*, and the *authors* beginning to have *readers*?

"*Emerging* from the obscurity and poverty in which they had been injuriously thrust; *re-occupying the benefices* and means of subsistence for their families, of which they had been robbed by democratic despotism, *slandered* in their morals, on the loosest and most suspicious evidence; *stigmatized, hunted* from place to place, *punished* for worshipping God after the manner of their fathers, and *proscribed* the use of their liturgy under heavy penalties; we cannot wonder, that the Clergy *urged* every possible measure, *for strengthening and securing* themselves."

This is meant to be a *powerful* sentence; but, like many other long sentences which I have intentionally passed over, it amounts to *nonsense*. Observe, the Clergy *are* emerging from poverty, *are* re-occupying the benefices, *are* urging every possible measure to secure what *they have obtained*; and, at the same time, *are* slandered in their morals, *hunted* from place to place, *proscribed* the liturgy, and *punished* for worshipping God after the

manners of their fathers! In fact, they were happy and woeful, free and oppressed, rich and poor at one point of time!

“*Toleration, we thank God, in this country, is universal.*”

Does the good man *mean*, that he thanks God *for toleration?* or that he thanks God *in this country*, and not in France or Germany? Which ever way it is settled, I am content to find he is *thankful*.

“Indeed, in the *lives* of their founders, although occasionally a Clergyman here and there might display a want of temper, *in* their intercourse with the higher orders of the hierarchy, they themselves cannot but admit the *uniform propriety* and gentleness with which they were treated. We allude, especially, to Benson, Bishop of Gloucester,” &c.

What shall I do with this extract now I have made it? It is so bad, I cannot mend it. It is composed of four *clauses*, which, if they were scattered to the four winds of heaven, would not complain of *dismemberment*. He finishes by saying, “We allude to *Benson*,” &c. I beg his pardon, he alludes to *uniform propriety*, &c.

— “*While no greater exertion is required from the preacher than to fill a given space crowded with his auditors, all are arranged in such a manner, that not one inch of accommodation is lost.*”

Worse and worse, were it possible. Let us observe. Why *while*? It is out of place. "No greater exertion is required."—*What* exertion? Is it of the *hands*, or the *feet*, or the *tongue*? "No greater exertion is required from the preacher, *than to fill a given space*." What, must the preacher not only *fill* the *pulpit*, but the *church* also?—"Then to *fill* a given space crowded with auditors." Now, Mr. Editor, do resolve me this problem, How can a man, *though a churchman*, *fill* a given space that is already crowded?

— "Which *we* must feed with still increasing excitements, or it will seek them for itself *elsewhere*."

What harmony is there between *person* and *place*? Just as much as between *we* and *elsewhere*.

—"From the *eloquent antagonists* of infidelity."

There are many descriptions of *antagonists* undoubtedly; but I fear the vocabulary of the *Fives' Court* itself, with all its *slang*, will not assist us to a definition of an *eloquent* antagonist.

—"And, *though* somewhat too *formal* and *scholastic* for the *exigencies* of the present time, prove, *nevertheless*, that zeal was not extinct, *even* in the bosom of the Church."

What harmony is there between *formal* and *scholastic*, and *exigencies*? This is a slovenly way of writing. We have, as is common, a *redundancy* of particles in the sentence. Here are, *though*, *nevertheless*, and *even*; *two* at least may be spared.

“ *It* has imperiously demanded, and succeeded in establishing our Church, on a solid foundation, in the East and West Indies; nor, at present, do we foresee any probability of *its* relaxing so far as to permit another period of that indolence and lukewarmness which is the natural result of security, to bring reproach upon the Establishment, or inspire its adversaries with hope of success. Within *its* sphere, *its* consciousness of utility, that noblest stimulus, will increase; nor can we encourage any hope that *its* antagonists will abate their jealousy, or repress their encroachments. But *her* cause is that of good sense and rational piety; *her* benefits are felt through the *whole mass* of society, from the *highest* to the *lowest*; we, therefore, trust *her* without the least apprehension of danger from the blundering demagogue, the bitter and envious Dissenter, or the artful infidel, *who* would make common cause with the *latter*, in order to overthrow *that which* he knows to be the bulwark of sincere Christianity.”

This is a considerable part of his last paragraph, on which the Reviewer has evidently bestowed pains, and which is meant to be, not merely correct, but eloquent and grand. Notwithstanding, I am sorry to say, it is a poor affair. The pronoun, *It*, at the head of

the extract, relates to *impulse* in the previous sentence. What has it done? This *impulse* has *imperiously demanded*, and *succeeded*, in *establishing* our Church, &c. This is wonderful! An *impulse* can *impel*, and I know of nothing else that it can do. But, here, it is made to *demand*; to demand *imperiously*, and to *succeed* in *establishing*. What has this *impulse* *established*? “Our Church,” says the Reviewer, “in the East and West Indies.” Yet observe, he previously states, that *this impulse* was *originated* by the *French Revolutionists*, and the *Methodists*; so that we have the *high Episcopal Church* in the *two Indies*, established by the *political* and *religious radicals* of the day! To return to the *construction*,—what does *imperiously demanded* agree with? Nothing. It must read either “has imperiously demanded *in establishing*,” or imperiously demanded *our Church*.” Neither of these are *sense*. The next sentence begins,—“Within *its* sphere *its* consciousness of utility,” &c. In *construction* the *its* must belong to *impulse*, then, we should have this mighty impulse, not only working wonders, but *conscious* of its *utility*. The Reviewer, however, in defiance of rule and perspicuity, means the *pronoun* to apply to the *Church*; then we have the several pronouns, *its*, *her*, and *that which*, in succession,

all at discord with each other; but meant to agree with the Church. "Her benefits," he continues, "are felt through the *whole mass* of society, from the highest to the lowest." Here are unity and plurality, after a world of wrangling, brought into a happy state of wedlock; first, we have the *whole mass*, and then the *highest mass*, and the *lowest mass*. Or would he insist on limiting his *highest* and *lowest* to society? Then we have the *highest* and *lowest* society of the *whole mass*. Pray what relation do *high* and *low* bear to the *whole*? Just the same affinity which *fire* has to *water*. A *part* is the relative of the *whole*. Finally, he says, "We therefore trust her without the least apprehension from the blundering demagogue, the bitter Dissenter, or the artful infidel, *who* would make common cause with the *latter*." What is the antecedent of the relative *who*? undoubtedly *infidel*; but it *cannot* relate to that word, because *the latter* must apply to it. Shall we suppose the Reviewer meant it to apply to demagogue, and Dissenter? It cannot; because the singular pronoun *he* follows in the sentence. Does he *mean* to limit it to *one* of the *two* then? If so, Mr. Editor, inform me which, for no skill of mine, nor any rule of syntax, can settle the point.

In addition to all the errors of this class, we have, without end, such inelegancies as the following:—*in order to allow—originally solely—for providing for—as regards—formerly more nearly uniform—an irreparable taint—eradicate the foulest taint—can but—cannot but against that which—will this depraved will—are by no means concerted by those whose—with which they bore what they will not—whom we see that—into that for the prevalence of which—not but that—even this—and every praise.*

Indeed, Mr. Editor the whole performance, judged on its literary pretensions, is really despicable; and I should be exceedingly sorry if any thing in our literature, or even in the extemporaneous discourses of our preachers should be found so bad. It is charged, not alone with the faults which I have now partially brought before you; but with innumerable failings under the more important heads of explication and argument. Beyond all that has incidentally appeared throughout the discussion, you are perpetually met by causes without causation; consequences without sequence; propositions without proof; and argument without connexion. There are assertions in direct conflict with each other; sentences with no sense; agents with nothing to do; and words that have nothing to say. And

when I observe that this single number of the Review contains no less than three articles by this same person, I am compelled to fear, that a work which has been worthy, in many respects, of the country and the times, is hastening to its decline. I trust, however, that, if these evils are threatening it, arrangements will be made to prevent them, before its reputation shall be lost. I earnestly deprecate whatever might have a tendency to lower or disgrace any one portion of the staple literature of the nation.

For the cause of Dissent and Dissenters, I have no anxiety. If it is the cause of truth, and of piety, it must prevail; if it is not, the sooner it is exposed and exploded the better. If I could not heartily say as much as this, a suspicion of its strength and goodness would instantly establish itself in my mind. If, however, we invite discussion to our principles, we ask at the same time, that professed discussion may not be made the vehicle of reproach and slander; above all, we ask, that if we are to be assailed by reproach and scandal, the rude attack may not be covered by hateful pretensions to charity and impartiality. We cannot be deceived by such despicable and inconsistent professions. *Be* impartial, and then your Reviewers need not

say you are ; *be* charitable, the fair face of charity was never mistaken. Your's, Sir, is a great responsibility ; and that responsibility as yet has not been properly respected. Already, by the continued misrepresentations, and contempt of the American people, your Journal has generated among them more enmity to this nation, than was excited by all the irritation of a long and disastrous war ; and if ever the Dissenters are to be brought so far to forget the strength of their principles, as to cherish hostility towards the Church, it must be by continuing, *ex cathedra*, to pour out upon them calumny, ridicule, and contempt. But, surely you have no desire to become a separatist among brethren. You would not rend a garment which ought to be without a seam ; and which, if it is seamed, and of many colours, may still, untorn, administer to our common protection and comfort. You will rather, I trust, be resolved to shake off whatever has weakened your efforts, and limited your usefulness. You will seek to consecrate the honours of literature by the charities of humanity. You will not write for a party, but for the world ; not for measures, but for MAN. You will employ the influence Providence has given you to soften our difference of opinion, to ameliorate the asperities of life, and to encourage the effort of manly

and virtuous principle wherever it is found ; you will be too noble in your motives, too exalted in your aim, to think any thing worthy of your reprobation, but that vice and those corruptions of our world, which are warring against the peace of mankind,—which are bearing myriads to destruction, and preying on them as they go.

FINIS.

WORKS

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THE
DISSENTERS' APPEAL :

A LETTER

TO

THE RIGHT HON. EARL GREY.

BY

“ VOX CLAMANTIS.”

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A L E T T E R.

MY LORD,

IT may appear presumptuous in an obscure individual, residing in a remote province, to address a nobleman of such exalted rank, such high attainments, such extensive influence, such liberal and comprehensive views, and such patriotic sentiments, as your Lordship.

I humbly conceive, however, that your very rank, associations, and important engagements themselves, have, to a certain extent, a tendency to disqualify your Lordship (even if they afford you opportunity or leisure) for paying a minute attention to the details of the subject I now venture to submit to your Lordship's attention. Aware of the engrossing nature of your Lordship's duties, and consequently of the value of your time, I have been anxious to express myself with brevity rather than elegance,

and have aimed at compression rather than at the niceties of composition.

I desire devoutly to recognize the hand of an overruling Providence, in placing you at the helm of his Majesty's government, and, converting the sycophantic language of an unprincipled advocate into the vehicle of honest gratulation and well-earned praise, we may exclaim, "Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, we accept it always, and in all places, with all thankfulness."

It is not, however, without pain, that I feel compelled to state, that there is one class of His Majesty's subjects, whose claims and grievances your Lordship is *supposed* to regard with a cool,* if not with an averted eye;—a body most warmly attached to the leading principles of your administration, whose loyalty has never been suspected, who have ever been reckoned among the firmest friends to the House of Hanover, and whose exertions in the cause of morality, education, and general benevolence have kept pace, in the main, with their respectful obedience to the laws, even when those laws have been (as far as regarded themselves) iniquitous, oppressive, and persecuting:—I mean,

* See Note A.

my Lord, the Body of the Protestant Dissenters of the realm.

That this (unhappy if untrue) impression pervades our body to a considerable degree, and is very deeply felt by the most reflecting part of it, the journals and periodical publications supposed to express our general views, abundantly testify. Without, however, assuming or denying its correctness, I shall venture respectfully to lay before your Lordship the grievances of which we complain, the rights which we conceive are unjustly withheld from us, and the persecuting tendency of some laws, which we think in common equity ought to be repealed.

Before entering more fully on the considerations connected with the previous allusions, I solicit your Lordship's attention to a few introductory remarks.

It is almost unnecessary to remind your Lordship of the powerful assistance rendered to the present administration, or rather to the cause of freedom, by the Dissenters and *their* Clergy, in the election preceding, and during the progress of, the Reform Bill. It was too palpable, too deeply felt, to need even a passing remark. For this, they neither ask nor deserve thanks; they only did that which it was their duty to do; all they needed was a fair opportunity of exhibiting their principles. The

Reform Bill afforded them one, at once ample and satisfactory. They then proved themselves a prepared people ;—prepared by their previous training in their free institutions, in their principles of voluntary associations and mutual support, and by the order, industry, knowledge of human nature and public business, so closely inwoven with the Congregational system. With them, public spirit is at once the result of their education, as well as a dictate of religious duty.

The Reform Bill did not *make* them, but *found* them, and proved them to be, individuals well versed in the principles of liberty ; and the transfer and adaptation of their energy and knowledge from the limited arena of their own peculiar institutions to the canvassing district, the committee-room or the hustings, was easy and efficacious.

To them the process of election (elementarily considered) was nothing new. All their previous habits (on a confined scale indeed) had fitted them for it. The source of our moral influence can be only feebly estimated by those who are not fully acquainted with the habits and discipline of the school through which we have passed. But just relieved from the penalties of a law, which for nearly a century and three quarters was the disgrace of the English statute book, and which branded some of the noblest spirits in

the realm with the stamp of political helotism, we are still reckoned practically among the "coloured population." The penalties attached to our imputed disobedience have been remitted, but the attainder has not been reversed. We are still painfully and degradingly reminded that we are only a tolerated, (that 'blasphemous word' when uttered by a human being, as the late Lord Stanhope is reported to have said)—yes, a tolerated body. This sense of degradation has operated upon us as a common bond of union; the weight of it has impelled us to examine into its history, to investigate its injustice, and to expose its iniquity. From our earliest years, placed perpetually upon the defensive, we have of necessity acquired mental habits to which the Churchman is likely, owing to his chartered immunities, to be in a great degree a stranger. We have been, as it were, *compelled* to acquire the ability to give a reason for the hope that is in us; and perhaps this may serve in a great measure to explain an expression attributed to the late Mr. Pitt (no mean judge, considering his political bias), that without attempting to account for it, he had been often led to remark, that the children of Dissenters were much better educated than those of a corresponding grade in society among Episcopalians.

To a legislator, a statesman, a minister of the crown, a correct knowledge of our principles, our history, our opinions, our habits, our polity, our numbers, and our influence, cannot, ought not, to be deemed unimportant. I would go still farther and say, that such knowledge is essential to the right discharge of his duties, particularly in the present day. For a statement of our principles, calm yet vigorous, guarded yet faithful, at once scriptural and eloquent, I would respectfully refer your Lordship to an Address, delivered by the Rev. Thomas Binney, on laying the foundation-stone of a new Meeting-house, on Fish-street-hill.

In a conversation in the Lords, during the last session, your Lordship is reported to have said, that the number of Dissenters in England and Wales scarcely amounted to one-fourth of the population, and the Bishop of London to have assented to the same. Without questioning or affirming the statement, but merely taking it as the basis of calculation, what is the inference which it furnishes us with, in reference to the Church of England?

Taking the term *Dissenter* in its most enlarged sense, our places of worship of all denominations amount to nearly, if not quite, 9000; on the average they would seat from 400 to 450

persons, and I should say that four sittings out of five were taken. Judging from my own observation, which extends over more than a quarter of a century, I conceive the average number of worshippers is from 250 to 300. I would, however, adhere to the lowest estimate, and take them at 250. This calculation will furnish 2,250,000. Allowing that not more than two-thirds (an estimate at which I have arrived by actual observation) of any *reputed* congregation assemble all at once from various causes, and you have 1,125,000 more; thus making a total of 3,400,000. Were we, on the other hand, to take the number of Churches in England,—say that they are 10,000 or even 11,000, and try them by the same test,—your Lordship would form a widely different estimate of the *relative* numerical proportions. Taking England through, what is the average number of worshippers in the Establishment? Unable myself of course to decide, I must rely on Episcopalians themselves; and they hesitate not to say that (*taking agricultural and thinly-peopled districts into the account*), it does not exceed 200. The 11,000 churches would thus give 2,200,000, and adding one-third, as in the former case, 3,300,000 worshipping Churchmen only appear. A large proportion of even these worship only once on the Sabbath,—in not a few parishes only once a

fortnight; whereas Dissenters, as a body, worship twice, and in most places three times. I am satisfied that even in England, (to omit Wales where Dissenters are as nine or ten to one,) taking the attendance of *actual* worshippers, from the dawn of the Sabbath to Saturday night in any given week, as a criterion, Episcopalians would be found in a sad minority. One thing does not appear to strike your Lordship,—“ That the millions who worship no where are not Churchmen.” So far from being friends to the Establishment, they are its bitterest and most ruthless, because its most unpercipient and unprincipled, enemies.

Before bringing these introductory remarks to a close, there is one point more on which I crave your Lordship’s patient indulgence. It is one with which I hope you will qualify all that I have said, and all I may say in the sequel—“ That in all the concessions which Dissenters require at the hands of the civil government, they seek for them, not as concessions to *themselves* as individuals, nor as to *their body*; but as concessions which they, as Christians, believe to be due to the sovereign claims of eternal rectitude and immutable truth.” We disown the low and dishonourable imputation of bartering our support (be it more or less) for parliamentary boons, for sectarian aggrandizement, or

personal distinction. In proceeding on the aggressive against political errors (in which we believe all our grievances originate), while we discard its fanatical association, our cry is "*Deus vult.*" We believe that *Christianity* demands at our hands the exertion to remove all that disfigures her fair form, curtails her just proportions, or that impedes her mild, benevolent, majestic march.

We believe that our grievances constitute a tremendous remora, not to the spread of *our* individual views of truth alone, but to the glory of our Maker; to the extension of our common Christianity; in one word, to the reign of Him who is "the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

My Lord, we are no changelings; our practical motto is "*Semper eadem.*" As far as *adherence* to our principles is concerned, we have found that our strength has been "to sit still." The mountain has not obeyed the call of office, honour, or emolument, but majestically reposes on its base; and if its brow be ever graced by the presence of those who have invoked its movement, it must be effected by a movement of *their own*. Drawing our principles from a source, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, we dare not go beyond or

fall short of the word of the Lord ; and if your Lordship wished for a specimen of *actual* uniformity (effected too in the absence of all human coercion, and in the face of the bitterest persecution), you see it in the history of the independent Dissenters of this kingdom. Well versed, as your Lordship doubtless is, in that history, it must have struck a mind so acutely formed as no ordinary spectacle ; nor need I, I am sure, remind your Lordship, that almost all the political and religious enactments of the last five, but especially of the last two, years, have been tributary to the truth and force of those principles which we and our ancestors have ever professed, and in the main acted upon. The world is fast beginning to do us justice. The obloquy that has attached to us in darker periods, has been dispersed by the rising beams of knowledge. Our principles, in proportion as they are understood, are admitted to be correct. The common sense of mankind decides in our favour ; and if the first indications of the reflux ebb be disregarded, we are sure that “ the great tide of public opinion gathers strength with every breaker.”

It may be possibly supposed by your Lordship, that these statements are only the splenetic effusions of an individual, who, like the fox, dis-

parages the clustered delicacies which he has been unsuccessfully endeavouring to appropriate, and who is still looking on them with a longing eye.*

My Lord, it is not so with me ; when in the ardour of one-and-twenty, I felt strongly inclined to enter the Church of England. My inducements were of no ordinary character. A gratuitous Oxford education was kindly offered by an individual, now one of the brightest ornaments of the Episcopal bench ; and a living was promised me at the close of my studies, superior in value to the average income of Dissenting Ministers : had I accepted it, and been, what I think it is probable I *might* have been, a decided partisan, my zeal and energy might have obtained for me a small cluster of the “goodly vine” of the Establishment. But, my Lord, tempting as the prospect was, on mature deliberation, I dared not pay the penalty ; I have never regretted the decision, and am therefore entitled at least to the appellation of a disinterested Protestant Dissenter.

Taking my stand then, my Lord, on the basis of the unchangeable word of God, and abandoning the low and accidental ground I occupy as a Protestant Dissenter, (for Dissent is a mere accident,) I solemnly, but respectfully call on

* See Note B.

you, as the Prime Minister of a mighty nation, to hear and redress grievances which are an outrage on *Christianity* itself.

“ Give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight,”—was the pathetic request of the princely patriarch to the hospitable sons of Heth. Hear, my Lord, the courteous reply ! “ In the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead ; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.” I will not trouble you with the sequel. The stranger was accommodated with the last narrow house, in which he might deposit the ashes of her whom he loved, by persons, in all probability, of *very* different religious views from himself. We hear nothing of their compelling him to submit to an arbitrary ritual, imposed by the laws of the land, nor of his deep and silent grief being disturbed by the intrusion of a native, an authorized, but to *him* an *alien*, priest.

But how stands it in England, my Lord, in an overwhelming majority of instances ? “ The mourners go along the streets, because man goeth to his long home.” They assemble around the open tomb. The full heart longs to hear the *well-known voice* that has hitherto assuaged its griefs, and poured the balm of religious consolation into its wounded recesses ; but the

luxury is denied. A *stranger* priest appears, an act-of-parliament ritual is recited, perhaps with professional *sang-froid*, the mortuary fee is demanded and paid, and the compulsory connexion ceases—till death again renews the offensive intercourse. I well remember one instance in which two interments were to take place at the same time. The characters of the deceased were as opposite as the poles. One had been the pest of society—an incarnation of vice. “He died, and made no sign.” The other “was not, for God took him;” his dying chamber was “privileged beyond the common walks of virtuous life.” The tear of holy gratitude almost chased away the bitter drops that nature shed o’er his ashes, and the relatives could even triumph at the tomb. The priest stood midway between the sepulchres, and the *form did for both*. My Lord, it were an insult to your understanding and principles to ask, Is this imposition justifiable?—is it decent? You well know the form and the rigour with which it is enforced; and that a clergyman *must* read, as well as believe all and every thing, on pain of being convicted (by his own conscience, at least,) of perjury. My object, however, is not to expose with malicious pleasure the unscriptural formularies of the Church; she may retain or expunge what she chooses. All we ask on this

point is, common justice. If a new or enlarged cemetery is wanted, we reply, "I will give thee money for the field; take it of me, and *I* will (not *you* shall) bring my dead there." We only ask at the hands of a christian government that indulgence, or rather that regard to justice, which Abraham received from the (perhaps idolatrous) sons of Heth. If by a *parochial* rate ground has been purchased for the purpose of interment, we *claim a right* in its conveniences. Who believes that after Abraham had paid for the land, the priests intruded themselves among the mourners, or vexatiously demanded mortuary fees?

I now come to the marriage ceremony. At the funeral hour, if the heart knows its own bitterness,—if the sacredness of sorrow ought to be respected,—so on the bridal morn a stranger ought not to intermeddle with its joy. The grasping avarice of the Church of Rome first constituted it a sacrament, for which in vain we ask for the authority of Scripture, antiquity, or reason. We never hear of marriages being performed in a church till twelve hundred years after the birth of Christ; they were *celebrated* in private houses. The meddling priest (although a guest perhaps seldom absent from the festive board) did not intrude himself as an ecclesiastical or recognized functionary on marriage occasions till 1429,

when the Council of Trent declared his presence indispensable to the validity of the contract. What right has any human being to call me to *any* altar, and force me to worship there? If we obey (and we are forced to submit, or our marriages are illegal), we are guilty of solemn mockery. Declining, as we do, from principle, to join in the communion of the Church of England, and openly, by our general conduct, bearing testimony against her unscriptural constitution, *here* we disgracefully compromise our principles, and justly expose ourselves to the contempt and derision of the friends of consistency. The marriage ritual itself is extremely objectionable, if not (to refined females) offensive and indelicate. What are we to understand by such childish and superstitious language as this,—“ With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship?” What lawyer will accurately define the limits of the investiture or renunciation,—“ And with all my worldly goods I thee endow?” And, to bring up the rear, what divine can explain, or man of sense perceive, the appropriateness of the remaining words,—“ In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?” It appears to us but slightly removed from the thoughtless oath of the common swearer. Why should our clergy bear the unjust stigma, that they are unfit to be trusted

with the celebration of marriages (if the laity wish for their services), while their brethren in "Scotland, Ireland, the British colonies, and christian ministers, of all sects and denominations, in the United States of North America, universally possess that privilege?" Why are we compelled, on these occasions, to remunerate a priest we disown, to receive a purchased blessing, and why debarred from enjoying the services and the unbought benediction of those whom we honour and love? We have long deemed compliance with the rite, as it now stands, to be a desertion of our general principles, and a compromise between the purity of divine worship and the dictates of expediency. The standing example of that most respectable body, "the Friends," has reproached our pusillanimity, and had we been as honest and as firm, we should long since have been equally successful.

To one class of Dissenters, the Unitarians, the yoke thus imposed is galling in the extreme. Holding no connexion with their creed, I yet deeply sympathize with their wrongs. A government originating or perpetuating the present marriage-law, may truly adopt the language of the Apostle Paul before his conversion, "*I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme;*" for to an honest Unitarian it is blasphemy, sheer blasphemy,

rendered next to imperative by act of Parliament. Our principles will never permit us to rest till the point in question be conceded.

I shall now, with your Lordship's permission, call your attention to the Ecclesiastical Court, or, as it has been termed (whether aptly, I will not decide), the English inquisition. With regular churchmen, who wish to retain it for the preservation of their spiritual health, we have no quarrel. We would not for a moment wish to deprive them of the blessings it is calculated to impart; all we would wish to secure is, that *they* should *exclusively* enjoy its benefits. It is possible the *laity* of the Establishment very highly prize its "conservative principles," admire the simplicity of its constitution, rejoice in its lenient gospel-like proceedings, are more than satisfied with its prompt and inexpensive decisions, and it may be, are quite in love with its transparent character. We, however, can afford to dispense with this evange-legal luxury. "The labours of love" of its benevolent officials, are works of supererogation with reference to us, seeing that we have some humble, but efficient apparatus of our own, which, though not under the surveillance and patronage of a Right Rev. Father in God, is found to be fully available for all practical purposes. If one member of an Independent Church libels, slanders, or injures

another, all the offended party has to do, is simply to obey the voice of the *Head* of the Church. “ If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone ; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church ; but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” The spectacle, I am happy to say, of one professing Christian going to law with another in the same Church is very, very rare, and is deemed most dishonourable to our principles. For us to insist on the abolition of this court, as a *religious* (?) institution, would be a violation of the great principles of religious liberty ; (we would not suppress even the “ order of Flagellants” by force ;) *we* have no right to deprive the Episcopalian of the full benefits of his system : all that we ask is, permission to decline its fostering aid, and to shelter ourselves either under the wing of our own Churches, or to seek a remedy through the medium of a British jury.

To us it is not quite so clear that it is a very lenient, inexpensive court, whatever a Churchman may find it. I happen to know one poor

man who was present in a parish church, when a notice for a parish meeting was given; he very innocently, poor creature! being entirely ignorant of the existence of such a tribunal, or of his liabilities to its operation, expressed *viva voce* some dissatisfaction with parish matters,—no very unusual thing, I believe, in the rude district he inhabited; he was served with a citation for “brawling in Church,” found guilty, the costs were 80*l.*, and the suit nearly ruined him. I have heard of another instance of an individual being brought before the same merciful tribunal. The aggrieved party was vindictive; a trial by jury would not have answered their purpose, as, in all probability, one farthing damages would have constituted the verdict. The ecclesiastical court gave them ample opportunity of revenge; and the defendant, besides incurring ecclesiastical censure, had to pay costs to the amount of 130*l.* I could give your Lordship another cruel instance—but I forbear. Indeed I have nearly myself been the subject of its “conservative discipline,” declining to pay my Church rates, (of which more hereafter,) as I believe them to be an iniquitous impost; the legal functionary of this district, though he might have ordered a distrain, left me as the only alternative, being put into the “Ecclesiastical Court,” an experiment I naturally declined. My Lord, our religious

liberties as *Christians* are incomplete until *we* cease to be amenable to a tribunal based on the temporal and legal power (misnamed spiritual) thus assumed by the Church of England, and in the name of Him whose “kingdom is not of this world,” and to *whose* laws and tribunals we cheerfully submit. *In his name* we demand exemption from a religious (!!!) Court that has not a shadow of foundation *in his* statute book.

The security of property, equitably possessed, ought to be an object of first-rate importance in a national point of view. With this, the undoubted validity of registers of births and deaths is closely inwoven. It has been questioned (whether justly or not I will not decide) if certificates of baptisms performed by Dissenting Ministers are, rigidly speaking, legal evidence of birth. Of one thing, however, I am certain, that such is the impression of uncertainty among some Dissenters, (or persons calling themselves such,) that to make assurance doubly sure, I have known them to have their children re-baptized at Church, that all the supposed legal benefits of parochial registry might accrue. Now, my Lord, in what degrading and secular point of view does this place one of the most solemn ordinances of the New Testament! What a disparaging reflection is thus implied on the Ministers of our body!—but here I need

not enlarge ; the evil is so palpable as it respects the nation at large, that when mentioned, we only wonder that it should have been so long quietly endured even by *Churchmen themselves*.

The great Founder of Christianity declares, “One is your Master, and all ye are brethren.” Never, my Lord, will this declaration be received and acted upon in England, as a general principle, while the Bishops retain their present unscriptural position in the House of Lords ! I mean not to advance one word hostile to Episcopacy itself. If it be an order instituted by Christ, *it must be perpetuated*, and in his hands we are willing to leave it. But few in the present day are prepared to stand by the preposterous and laboured assumptions of Bishop Warburton in behalf of these mitred Legislators ; Christianity is now too well understood, even by our domestic servants, to render it politic (if it were possible) to impose upon them the splendid yet glaring fiction. With the New Testament in their hands, to whose sober statements they bring every religious question, in their mind a Bishop’s throne creates no reverence, his crosier produces no emotion, his mitre inspires no awe. They look at the primitive Bishops of the New Testament, inquire into their characters, their employments, their attainments and qualifications, and compare

them with the splendid hierarchy of the Establishment. They see the latter ranked with the peers, judges, and princes of the land; and they, *even they*, hesitate not to declare, that as far as it is unscriptural, it must fall. My Lord, their presence in the House is an evil to Christianity itself. It is a positive violation of the command of its great Founder: "The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. *But it shall not be so among you.*"

It is, moreover, a duty we owe the Bishops themselves. The advice which the Apostle Paul gave to a primitive Bishop, must be equally applicable to any person sustaining that office to the end of time. He says, after referring to spiritual duties, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself *wholly to them*, that thy profiting may appear unto all men." Now, how can their Lordships follow this injunction, if they are called to exchange their pastoral duties for those of legislation and forensic debate for five months out of twelve? Seeing that they have been led solemnly to declare that they have been moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon them the care of souls, is it just to infringe on the valuable time which they must feel so anxious to devote to their high and holy calling? Is it right cruelly to demand those energies for the

service of the world, which they have solemnly and exclusively dedicated, at their entrance into the ministry, to the service of God ? We ought to relieve them from the pressure of those onerous and painful duties which are so manifestly uncongenial with the office of a teacher of Christianity, which have such a tendency to secularize their sacred character, and to withdraw their attention from those pursuits to which the Apostles and primitive Bishops directed their incessant, undivided, and laborious regard.

From the conduct of the Bishops in the Lords for the last one hundred and fifty years, it is clear that the cause of freedom, education, religion, and general benevolence have gained little, if any thing, by their presence or their votes. On *one memorable previous occasion*, indeed, they dared to oppose the arbitrary power of James the Second, and voted against the Crown. The peculiar circumstances of the case account for it ; but, since that period, I scarcely remember another instance in which the King or his Ministers have been materially thwarted by the Bench, *as a body, till very lately*. For the last half century they have proved palpably, that the elements of episcopacy and legislation, when combined in one person, neutralize each other, and spoil both. The episcopal character sadly succumbed during a long and bloody war ;

it slumbered for years, while the cry of the slave appealed in vain for redress ; and, during the progress of the Reform Bill, (against which twenty-one Bishops voted,) as well as since, it has become apparent to the nation at large, that Ministers of the Gospel mistake their element, when, instead of taking the oversight of the Church, they take the oversight of the world. The secular prelates of the Roman Catholic Church did contrive to blend the two characters ; but it is inconsistent with the genius of Protestantism, and is proved by its *effects* to be incompatible with the spirit of New Testament Christianity. If the *Apostles* deemed it inconsistent with their spiritual duties to “ leave the word of God to serve tables,” or, in other words, to see that the poor were not neglected, alleging as a reason, “ We will give ourselves *continually* to prayer, and to the ministry of the word ;” can it be the duty of those who deem themselves their successors, to leave the word of God for human legislation and party politics ? purposes far more foreign to their sacred vocation than feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and relieving the distressed. My Lord, if we were silent, the Bible—(and its voice is—must be—will be heard)—the Bible calls on them not “ to entangle themselves” with the affairs of this life ; it bids them “ preach the word ;” to

be “ instant in season and out of season ;” to “ reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine ;” to “ do the work of an Evangelist, and make full proof of their ministry.” We repeat it, the Bible calls on them, and recognizing in the great Head of the Church the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, we dare not be silent till that call is obeyed.

The exclusion of all persons from the benefits of our Universities, who cannot swear “ *ex animo*,” without mental equivocation or reservation, to all and every thing contained in the book of Common Prayer, is either an honour or a stigma, exclusively connected with the English Protestant Universities. It is the natural, I had almost said necessary, tendency of learning and science, to liberalize the mind, to expand its views, and to destroy the narrow distinctions of sect and party. The learning and sciences acquired at Oxford and Cambridge appear to produce effects decidedly the reverse. Not content with barricading their own portals with (to an honest Dissenter) an impassable *chevaux-de-frise*, their sons, with meddling malice, persecute them “ even unto strange cities ;” so that Durham dares not confer, on Sectaries, academic honours ; and they are striving (if report be true) to strangle that infant Hercules, the London University, in the cradle, or at least to keep it

for ever in swaddling clothes. Nay, farther, it would appear that the "*green withes*" of the Cam and Isis have, for a time, bound with their supple ligature one of the strongest minds and most masculine intellects that ever adorned the woolsack. When will the Samson awake from his apparently delusive slumbers? when will he derisively snap the feeble osiers, and re-assert his terrible, his majestic, his irresistible energy? To him it were but a sportive effort, a playful movement, to burst open, unhinge, and in sarcastic triumph—(methinks I see even now the withering curl of that upper lip)—to bear away the massive gates which have hitherto frowningly denied admission to all but one exclusive arrogant sect. Let the Universities beware when they talk of "vested interests," of prescriptive rights, of undisputed possession of "their legal title." This is an inquisitive age. Errors are not inspected, because the rust of antiquity may challenge veneration. Rights are very ambiguous things, as applied to public bodies, as corporations municipal will soon experience; and with reference to corporations ecclesiastical, viewed in connexion with parliamentary power, "a breath may make them as a breath *has* made." We have a right to expect that a national property shall be employed to produce "the greatest good of the greatest number." Were our Universities

brought, in their present state, to such a test, I am persuaded that “ *Mene* ” would not be an inappropriate inscription on their walls. Let them learn liberality, if their own creed failed to teach them, from the Universities of Catholic Germany, Lutheran Holland, quiet Denmark, despotic Russia, suspicious Austria, severe Prussia, bigotted Spain, or from the illustrious Don Miguel himself; for we have yet to learn that ere the beardless boy matriculates, a slavish and degrading subscription is exacted by any of the states to which we have referred.

In a Christian point of view, the consequences are every way to be deprecated. Are not all Christians, out of the pale of the Establishment, (and they are not few,) told by this exclusion, in the plainest language, that their teachers are unauthorized, irregular, and self-constituted? The sanctified genius, brilliant intellect, and glowing eloquence of a Hall, the profound learning of a Pye Smith, and the deep research of an Adam Clarke, (to pass over many names as great,) are all disparaged, because their consciences forbade them to draw their lore from the National Universities. My Lord, we confidently look to you to remove this unmerited stigma, not so much from us as individuals as from our principles.

If it be true, as has been ingeniously argued,

that disgrace is as heavy an infliction to minds endued with keen susceptibility as corporal punishment is on individuals of coarser mould, the exaction of church-rates may be fairly adduced to exemplify the position. Supporting our clergy, our schools, our colleges; in some instances entirely, in others partially, our own poor; building and keeping in repair our own meeting-houses; defraying the expenses of our own missions by the spontaneous contributions of our body; your Lordship can form but a feeble conception of the galling and vexatious associations connected in our minds with the demand of church-rate. It perpetually reminds that throughout the whole length and breadth of the land, we are regarded as the "Pariah caste," the drudges and Gibeonites of the body ecclesiastical.

The Church itself here advocates our cause. By the word "Church," however, I mean any thing but Archbishops, Bishops, Archdeacons, Prebends, Rectors, &c. *They* are not *the Church*; they are only, if Scripture be true, the Ministers of the Church. By the Church I mean the correct definition given of it in the 19th Article in the Book of Common Prayer. I mean, "The visible Church of Christ," which is "a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly

administered, according to Christ's ordinance," &c. &c. Yes, my Lord, many congregations of *faithful men* of the Episcopalian persuasion have in full conclave with christian generosity declared, that we ought not to be taxed for their religious accommodation. If the Bishops and Clergy are to decide, I have no hope; but if the "Church" be appealed to I have no anxiety.

It were a libel on the zeal and piety of any respectable Episcopalian congregation to suppose, that they would not by voluntary contribution, defray the incidental expenses connected with "the holy and beautiful house where their fathers worshipped!"

I know many pious Episcopalians who conceive the compulsory payment of rates by Dissenters to be a degradation to themselves as religionists, and who are most anxious for the removal of the stain. It was not long since a liberal Churchman said to me, "I am a decided friend to the Church, but I am anxious to see church-rates supplanted by voluntary contributions; the Church separated from the State; the Bishops released from their burdensome parliamentary avocations; the Government made trustee of the commuted tithes, and congregations electing their own Ministers;"—and my Lord, such Churchmen are not rare.

The same principle on which we object to

church-rates as unjust, applies with equal force to the parliamentary grants, which of late years have been so liberally made for building new churches. The mode indeed by which the money is raised may not be so immediately and palpably offensive, but it is in reality compelling Dissenters to support a system which they regard as unscriptural.

It is, I conceive, the duty of a Christian Government to render the erection and maintenance of places of worship of every denomination, as easy and as cheap as possible, for this reason; that even those sects which may be deemed (and perhaps justly) the *most* unscriptural, do at least inculcate morality and obedience to the *civil* magistrate; and in proportion as a nation is moral, the less expensive will be the administration of the laws, especially with reference to the criminal code. But our meeting-houses are *never* paid for. The statute of Mortmain, by an operation which we would hope was never intended to apply to places of worship, subjects us to perpetual expense. A *Church* once erected, whether by subscription or by a private individual, simply needs to be kept in repair. The title to the ground once ascertained, and the building dedicated to public worship, the question of *property* is permanently settled. But owing to the anomalous situation

Dissenters occupy in the eye of the law, the expenses of trust-deeds in perpetuity are entailed upon us. Taking the average renewal of these instruments to be once in twenty or twenty-five years, and reckoning the number of our meeting-houses to be 8,500 (which is below their number), and the expense of every deed to be at least 12*l.* (which is not *above* the mark), we incur an expense of at least 40,000*l.* every ten years, to ensure our right and title to *our own property*.

My Lord, I respectfully ask is this just? Were the presiding genius of the upper house (a phrase of his own, I believe, in by-gone days), to turn his attention to this statement, his capacious and penetrating mind would devise a remedy in less time than it has taken me to pen this paragraph.

Here I would respectfully submit to your Lordship a question. So far from rendering places of worship unnecessarily expensive, would it not be decidedly to the interest of the Government and the nation at large, in a moral point of view, to encourage their erection by allowing a drawback on all exciseable or other materials which have paid any duties? The amount might be easily ascertained by a surveyor, and bond given for the repayment, if ever the building should be converted to secular purposes.

But to return from this digression. Let it not

be supposed that the grievances which I have enumerated, although they are indeed the most prominent and galling, are all of which we have to complain. The petty exception of the repeal of the 5th statute of George I. c. 6., which forbids "any magistrate to go in his gown or other peculiar habit, or with the insignia of his office, to any other place than the Established Church," pointedly declares that the stain is not removed from our escutcheon. The *mere insignia* of office are *baubles* in our estimation; nor can we look at those individuals who grasp them so tenaciously in any other light than that of children, who are very anxious to prevent other children from amusing themselves with their playthings. Still the *animus* which prevented the repeal, (for if my memory serves me aright it was alluded to in the discussion on the Repeal of the Test Act,)* was as disgraceful to a British senate, as the petty childish law is now to our statute book. It is telling the Dissenter, You may be mayor, but you shall not degrade the mace by carrying it to meeting. The mayor may worship where he chooses, but the mace, the mace alone (dignified exception!), like the privy councillor of other days, is still forbidden by act of parliament *to frequent conventicles*. What a consolation it must have been to the

* See Note C.

witnesses who prophesied in sackcloth on that doleful occasion, that although the *Constitution* had received an incurable ghastly wound, they had preserved the *Mace* !! We know that your Lordship is not accountable for the existence of this puerile absurdity, any more than you are for those grievances that have been alluded to previously ; but they are mentioned in the confident hope that you will have the honour of consigning them to their merited oblivion.

It would tire your Lordship's patience, were I to dwell on those offensive points that remain at any length ; I shall, therefore, only glance at them in a cursory manner. If any of them are deemed trifling, like that last referred to, let it be remembered that *on us* they reflect a painful, an unmerited degradation. They are, indeed, some of them, pitiful and contemptible, but they prove the disposition of their abettors, and their trifling character stamps additional disgrace on any government which perpetuates such puny persecution.

If Clergymen be proper persons to fill the magisterial bench, why are our Clergy publicly told, by their exclusion, that they are not fit to be entrusted with the administration of the laws ? We have men of property and intelligence ; why, at least, is not the offer made to them ? If, however, such a station be incom-

patible with the clerical character (and who doubts it?) why are any tolerated there? Why are not our Clergy invited to become grand-jurymen for counties? Why the invidious distinction, we ask? Again, why are they perpetually reminded of their helotism, by being excluded from the chaplaincy, not only of our factories, our garrisons, our ships of war, our regiments, our colonies, and our grammar-schools, but even of our workhouses, our hospitals, and our prisons? Why are they pursued to the convicts' hulk, and even to the penal settlement? Why are the *very felons* told that we preach "another gospel," and that none but authorized ministers can reconcile those wretched outcasts to the offended Majesty of heaven? Why are they told that teachers, who have evangelized Otaheite, are not to be tolerated among the exiled criminals of Port Jackson? Why are our laity insulted by advertisements, of frequent occurrence, for a master or mistress of a workhouse, in which we are told that *no Dissenter need apply*? Why are the portals of our alms-houses (not always founded by *Churchmen*, nor exclusive by deed) for the most part closed against the humble sectarian? Why are we subject to the petty exaction of Easter offerings? Why is the Archbishop of Canterbury the only name in the

kingdom to which we must pay our testamentary obeisance ? and why is the Prerogative Court (a daughter of the Establishment) the only tribunal where we can obtain redress in some matters purely secular ? Why are we, in distant counties, obliged to go to an hybrid officer (a strange compound of law and gospel), called a registrar, who, in the name of the Archdeacon, grants probates, copies of wills, issues administrations, and who, strange to say, grants licenses for houses in which the *Supreme Being may be worshipped* ?—thus perpetually reminding us that the Church is our secular (we will not concede, our spiritual) superior. Why are the “tintinnabular appendages” to the steeple, which are generally provided at the parish expense, mute or vocal, just as the whim or caprice of an irresponsible individual dictates ? Why are we, in these and many other instances, so insultingly told, “that we have no portion in David, nor inheritance in the Son of Jesse ?” Why is the fountain of inspired truth, the Bible itself, placed under the lock and key of our monopolizing Universities ? Why are we, with reference to all meetings on parochial business, told, that all proceedings are illegal, unless conducted, or incipiently so, within consecrated walls ? Why is a Dissenting minister’s right of voting so equivocal ?

The vexatious obstacles which have been thrown in the way to prevent our Clergy from exercising the elective franchise, demands your Lordship's most serious attention. I have known A. registered in one district without opposition, and B., with precisely the same qualification, rejected in another. Every ordained minister, enjoying beneficial proceeds to the amount of ten pounds from a chapel, and having been in possession a twelvemonth, ought to have his vote as well as the licensed curate. Your Lordship need not be afraid of *their* clerical influence. We trust this will be satisfactorily settled ere another session is past.

But, to return ; Why are our judges expected (if not compelled) to worship at the Established Church in every assize town, ere they proceed to the discharge of their judicial functions ? Why are we, if not like serfs and villeins, yet like vassals holding under the Church "*in capite*," thus compelled to do suit and service, as to some arrogant feudal lord, whose title we disown, whose claims we disavow, and to whom we will not, *dare* not acknowledge the shadow of homage ? Why is this unscriptural power permitted to

" ————— bestride the narrow world
Like a Colossus ? And we *petty* men
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about
To find ourselves '*dishonourable graves* ?' "

I will tell you, my Lord, *why* it is ; and my answer brings me to the last point to which I shall invite your Lordship's attention ;—a point in comparison with which all others shrink into insignificance, and which, if conceded, (and conceded it *eventually* must be, unless revelation is a fable,) every grievance must of consequence disappear with its concession ; it is the major proposition, which, necessarily, involves the minor ; when it is acceded to, the word “ Dissenter ” will no longer be known, but as a matter of history.

We endure all these evils “ BECAUSE THE CHURCH IS CONNECTED WITH THE STATE.” It is because Episcopacy is exclusively the favoured sect. It is because the most enlightened government in Europe cannot see that by exclusively patronizing, endowing, and ennobling this sect, it must, in proportion, neglect, injure, and forfeit the attachment of every other ; and never, my Lord, will justice be done to that Church which is “ Christ's body,” till the incongruous association be severed. All that *Christ* has given to the Church of England she will retain, for no *human* power can wrest it from her ; all that *He* has not, she must relinquish. The word, “ separation,” may be “ unmusical to reverend ears, and (possibly) harsh in sound to thine.” If we may judge from her

conduct of late, she is any thing but an "help-meet" to the powers that be. The Church and State! What relation to the State are we to understand she bears? Is it a league? Solomon and Hiram made a league, and the *secular* party in this compact obtained for his remuneration "*Cabul*." Is it matrimonial? The bride has proved her infidelity to her spouse, and glories in her shame; and, even now, in almost every town and village in the kingdom, is uttering "hard speeches" against her liege lord, and is plotting his ruin: it is high time to move for a divorce, and she may think herself but too happy to be allowed a separate maintenance. Is it maternal? She has verified, and practically illustrated, a figure that revelation exhibits as an almost impossible outrage on nature. She "*has* forgotten her sucking-child, and has had no compassion on the sons of her womb." She has weaned the affections of her offspring, has compelled them to desert the parental roof, and to seek refuge among "unauthorized pastors." Is it filial? If so, she has forgotten the fifth commandment, and the parent state may upbraidingly ask, "If I be a father, *where* is my reverence?" or mournfully exclaim, with Lear,—

"How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child."

We might fearlessly appeal to history in all ages, to prove the assertion, that the union of Church and State has uniformly disparaged the purity and efficacy of the one, and impaired the strength of the other. It is the very nature of such an establishment to retard improvement, to paralyze exertion, and sacrifice the good of the many for the aggrandizement of the few. Why were the exclusive powers of the East India Company so materially modified during the late Session? — because commercial monopoly is known and felt to be an evil! What, then, must we think of a power affecting to monopolize the merchandize of souls? Can it be of much longer duration? If no human being replied, the voice of the Eternal answers—NO!

This being the situation which we as a body at present occupy, it is not an unnatural question to ask, “WHAT WILL THE DISSENTERS DO?”

Although an obscure individual (and perhaps I ought to apologize to the body of Dissenters for my presumption), I would respectfully offer my brethren in bonds, my companions in unmerited exclusion, a few suggestions relative to their immediate duties.

I would advise them to present addresses from every part of the kingdom to our noble and patriotic king, containing a statement of the

evils of which we complain, beseeching him to do justice to us, and our *principles*.

I would advise them to send petitions from every congregation in the kingdom to the Lords and Commons in Parliament assembled.

I would advise them to write to every member of Parliament for the boroughs (where represented) and counties in which they reside, requesting them to support the prayer of the same.

I would advise them patiently to wait for the King's speech, at the opening of the ensuing parliament, in which I cannot but hope some royal indications of sympathy and intended relief will be conveyed.

I would advise them to interest the public in behalf of their principles, by the calm, yet firm exhibition of them through the medium of public meetings, convened for the express purpose.

I would advise them forthwith to commence a cheap periodical publication, to be called "The Religious Liberator," conducted on manly, patriotic, and christian principles; containing a complete statement of our views on the subject of civil and religious liberty, and exposing the evils of which we complain.

I would suggest that deputies from Dissenting congregations in the several counties should

assemble on some given day, and request an audience of his Majesty's Ministers, with a view to ascertain how far they are favourable to their claims.

Should there not, however, appear any rational ground for anticipating considerable concessions (not to us, I most solemnly repeat, but) to our principles, or rather to the demands of christian equity—I would then fearlessly venture on advice of a bolder character, and recommend a far more extensive line of operation.

Ere, however, I glance at this, I would most earnestly entreat of your Lordship not to compel us to take steps which we cannot contemplate without reluctance. God is our witness that we wish not needlessly or vexatiously to embarrass you or your colleagues. We cannot but revere the simple, transparent integrity of an Althorp; the consistent, liberal, and enlightened Russell, worthy of his noble ancestry; we cannot but admire the patriotic Lansdowne; Holland, the dignified and eloquent friend of liberty; the amiable Ripon; the gigantic intellect of a Brougham, (who, like the elephant, combining wisdom, strength, and minute perception, can uproot the gnarled oak of corruption, or with the most flexible and delicate tact can seize the smallest grain of intellectual gold and add it to the treasury of knowledge;) the rectitude of a

Melbourne; and it were base *ingratitude* not to acknowledge our obligations to the noble and high-minded Premier.

We thank the present Ministers that they have expunged the hateful word "SLAVE" from our national and colonial vocabulary;—we thank them for the ample shield they have interposed between the missionary and his heartless persecutor;—we thank them for the abolition of commercial restrictions; for the reduction of national burdens; for throwing open the hitherto close corporations in Scotland; for legal reforms effected and prospective;—we thank them for the corporation commission in England, and for the indications of educational improvement.

You have no warmer supporters, nor more ardent advocates for the general policy you have pursued, than the Dissenters of the realm. I speak the sense of almost every enlightened man, I know, when I say it would be with heartfelt conscientious pain, that we should take any step (even though impelled by the most positive dictate of duty) that would place us fairly at issue with a ministry that has done so much good in so little time. We know the conflicting interests that assail you in every direction; we are aware that the scotched snake of corruption is watching its opportunity of making you feel its vindictive and deadly fangs. Full well we

know that heartless Radicalism, and unprincipled Toryism, like Herod and Pilate, have hushed their mutual hatred awhile, and leagued to destroy the political regenerators of the world ; and we dread, while seeking those rights which Scripture entitles us to demand, lest we should be weakening your hands, impairing your energies, or needlessly distracting your councils. We should hesitate ere we adopted Bentham's position as applied to the present Government, " Only by making the ruling few uneasy can the oppressed many hope for a particle of redress." My Lord, we are not factious, unreasonable, discontented men. We despise the low gratification of thwarting those who are in power merely with a view of proving our own supposed importance.*

But, my Lord, if it should appear (which Heaven forefend!) that our just complaints meet with no sympathy——my Lord, I will not allow myself to draw such a conclusion; I will not so far wrong our noble Sovereign; I will not so wrong you or your illustrious colleagues,—as to suppose it possible that any ulterior movement will be necessary ; I therefore check myself, and, contrary to my original intention, will suppress the suggestions I would have offered to the body

* See Note D.

with which I have the honour to be identified. I will not believe it possible that men, who have done so much to extend the rights of the citizen, will still leave the Christian in fetters ;— that men, who have so nobly responded to an indignant nation's cry, will be deaf to the voice of the Eternal ! Will the men who, under God, proclaimed liberty to the captive, pause in their noble career ? No ! no ! we cannot, we will not believe it. With reference *to* you, we cherish the fond hope, and *for* you we utter the fervent prayer, that you may be the honoured instruments “ to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burden, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke.”

There is nothing, as a body, we dread so much as a premature, an unwarranted, a turbulent movement. We shall watch with breathless anxiety every ministerial expression, every official indication that bears upon our claims. That they must be eventually conceded, is in our minds a conviction, which combines the strength of a passion with the force of a principle.

Justice, reason, policy, the warning voice of ages past, the present state of the public mind, above all, that uncompromising authority, THE WORD OF GOD, all, all demand them, not in favour of ourselves, not as a boon to us as a

sect,—I repeat it, my Lord, *not as a boon to us as a sect*, but as necessary to the happiness of the nation, the spread of Christianity, and (if your Lordship will admit the description which Linnæus gives of England, “the speck of life in the egg of the world,”) I may add, **FOR THE WELFARE OF THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE.**

It may appear strange to others, if not to your Lordship, that in recounting the grievances of Dissenters, while I have referred to some confessedly of minor consequence,—that the Tithes, on all hands allowed to be a most important subject, should be passed over in silence. My reason is this; my own mind is far from being settled on the point, nor do I believe that, as a Dissenter, I am singular in my indecision. Thus much, however, I think, is clear.

1. That they are a distinct property.
2. That neither the landlord nor tenant has the slightest claim on them; as the land has been purchased or rented with the recognition of, or calculation on, their existence.
3. That the amount was originally designed for religious purposes, thus bearing “*Corban*” upon its very front.
4. That the Church of England (in abstract equity) has no exclusive title to them, but merely holds them of the State, “*Durante bene placito*,” or “*quamdiu se bene gesserit*.”

5. That the State has *now* as much the power to modify, divert, and apply them *as it had three centuries ago*.

6. That in the shape in which they exist, and as they are collected at present, they constitute a ruinous incubus on agriculture, and are the source of endless heart-burnings between the payers and receivers.

The complete abolition of the tithes has been advocated by men far, very far, my superiors. The duty or the necessity of their annihilation I must leave to abler individuals, as it is a point on which, were I called on so to do, I should tremble to pronounce a final decision. It is a property, to the origination of which we are no parties; it is a property which, I think, we never should have created; but *finding* it in existence, and it being devoted to religious purposes, it is to me very questionable how far we should be justified in its extinction.

To conclude; Those who feel deeply will speak strongly! "The flesh will quiver where the pincers tear;" and if, while writhing under the infliction of unmerited torture, a hasty or an abrupt expression has escaped me, I crave your Lordship's indulgence. Perhaps I ought to apologize to an individual of your exalted rank for the undue familiarity, or apparent levity, with which I have alluded to some

topics ; but to treat such childish persecution gravely, would be almost like clothing the woes of Gulliver in his capillary thralldom, in Pope's " Sounding Line," or setting some exploded and ridiculous nursery rhymes to the deep diapason of a Handel.

I hope that no unbecoming remark has fallen from my pen ; for nothing would give me greater pain than to *deserve* the charge of having expressed myself disrespectfully to one of the noblest, most enlightened, upright, patriotic, and most consistent statesmen in Europe.

I remain,

Your Lordship's obedient Servant,

" VOX CLAMANTIS."

N O T E S.

NOTE A.—Page 4.

“ *With a cool, if not with an averted, eye.*”—Perhaps your Lordship will not so much wonder at this impression, when I refer you to a pamphlet which lately appeared, generally believed to be a Treasury publication, entitled the Reform Ministry and the Reformed Parliament. In it, crying as we think our grievances are, we are not honoured by even the most distant hint of redress, amidst all the prospective allusions it contains.

NOTE B.—Page 13.

If it be supposed that *we* wish to engross the exclusive privileges and emoluments which the Church now enjoys, it can only be by those who are utterly unacquainted with our principles. If King, Lords, and Commons, were to-morrow to constitute “ Congregationalism ” the established religion of the land ; to invest it with all the honours, wealth, secular and

official influence, that now dignify (or encumber) Episcopacy ; while we still avowed the principles, we must decline the association, and turn Dissenter from *even such* an Establishment the very next hour.

NOTE C.—Page 34.

Since writing the above, I have been enabled to procure access to the debates in question, from which I extract as follows :—

“ The Bishop of Chester wished to ask the noble and “ learned lord (Lord Tenterden) whether it is not now the “ law, that no chief magistrate of a corporation could go to a “ conventicle with the insignia of his office ? ”

Lord Tenterden replied, “ That whether it were or were “ not the law, and he believed it was,—no Mayor should “ attend a conventicle with his *mace* ; yet it did not go half “ the length he wished by his amendment.”

“ The Bishop of Chester begged to remind the noble and “ learned lord, that when the bill against Occasional Con- “ formity was passed, in order to quiet the apprehensions of “ those who thought it would take magistrates from the “ church and carry them to conventicles, it was enacted, that “ no magistrate should attend, with the insignia of his office, “ any place of worship but the Established Church. He “ believed that that law was not only at present in force, but “ that it was well known to the members of all corpora- “ tions.”

The patriotic anxiety of the noble lords deserves to be handed down to an admiring posterity. We would gratefully suggest an addition to their armorial bearings, to commemorate their “ conservative virtue,” viz. :—

A shield of *pretence*,—field, *sable*,—charged with a cluster of maces, *fretty*.

NOTE D.—Page 45.

The patriotic, or rather christian, *feeling*, which induced Dissenters to forego their own advantage for the general good in the reign of James II., when they might have emancipated themselves from the Test Act, is not yet quite extinct. The experience, however, of the “tender mercies” of the *high* church party renders them cautious in the exercise of *that feeling* now. Ere we imitate, however, the ill-requited self-devotion of our ancestors, we must be *quite* sure that the general good does demand our quiescence now,—a point on which the Tories have taught us to be more than sceptical.

THE
VOLUNTARY
PRINCIPLE,

BY

JOSEPH TYSO.

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.” PAUL.



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THE VOLUNTARY PRINCIPLE.

IT is a remark of Graham in his book on Ecclesiastical Establishments, "that they who ascend so high as the age of Moses, or indeed any period of the Jewish economy to find the model of the Christian church, are antiquarians to a dangerous excess: for they endeavour to demonstrate the existence and character of a thing, prior to its own beginning, and of course make Moses the founder of their constitution rather than Christ, who is the only lawgiver to Christians." This witness is true; and if the Mosaic economy involved the compulsory support of religion, it would be necessary to point out the alteration which in this respect has been made by the christian dispensation: but it will be sufficient for the purpose of vindicating the voluntary system, to shew that *the former dispensation involved no such principle as human compulsion, and that the latter has not adopted it.*

Whatever is purely moral in religion is in its nature unalterable. Such is love to God and man. Whatever is ceremonial, may be altered by the will of the supreme lawgiver, in full harmony with his character; and he has accordingly changed the Jewish, for Christian ordinances; but has left unchanged the voluntary system of support. Indeed it is impossible that there can be any act religiously performed without the will of the performer. If men were forced to give to the poor against their inclination, there would be no charity; if they were thus compelled to confess their sins, and to pray or praise, there would be no exercise of true religion. God

demands willing service, "My Son, give me thy heart." "It is with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." The Bible and the Bible alone is the statute book of the kingdom of heaven; and on this authority we observe,

FIRST. *That it is the will of God that religion should be supported by the voluntary contributions of the people.* Pecuniary aid is required for the building and repairing of places of worship, and for the support of the ministers of religion; and the scriptures show that all these were done by voluntary contributions. The tabernacle was the first place erected for religious worship. The order to make it was from heaven; "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering, of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering, and this is the offering that ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass," &c. "And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell amongst them," Exod. xxv. 1 ---3, 8. Moses having communicated this to the people, they returned to their tents, and made a selection of what had been specified, and "they came every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made *willing*, and they brought the Lord's offering to the tabernacle of the congregation, and they came both men and women as many as were *willing-hearted*, and brought bracelets, and ear-rings, and rings, and tablets; all jewels of gold, and every man that offered, offered an offering of gold unto the Lord." Exod. xxxv. 21. 22. "The children of Israel brought a *willing* offering unto the Lord, every man and woman whose heart made them *willing*." ver. 29. "And they brought yet unto him *free* offerings every morning," until there was "much more than enough for the service of the work:" so that Moses caused a proclamation to be made

throughout the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing." chap. xxxvi. 5. 6. Here the *voluntary principle* worked admirably.

The contributions towards the temple were entirely *voluntary*. King David assembled all the princes of Israel, and the heads of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered unto him, and he stood up and addressed them thus; "Hear me, my brethren and my people; I had it in my heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building. But God said, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father." 1 Chron. xxviii. 2, 3, 6, Then turning to the chosen Architect he said, "And thou Solomon my son know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; take heed now, for the Lord hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong and do it." Then David gave unto Solomon his son the plans and specifications of the house, of all that he had given to him by the Spirit in writing, xxviii. 12. 19. He then commenced the subscription by a princely *free will offering* of 3000 talents of gold, and 7000 talents of refined silver, and addressing the congregation, he said, "Who then is *willing* to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" and they gave liberally for the service of the house of God, gold, silver and precious stones. "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered *willingly*, because with a perfect heart they offered *willingly* to the Lord, and David the

king also rejoiced with great joy. Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation; and David said, Blessed be thou, Lord God of Israel our father for ever and ever. But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer *so willingly* after this sort! for all things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee." He then appealed to God as the searcher of all hearts, saying, "As for me, in the uprightness of mine heart I have *willingly* offered all these things; and now have I seen with joy thy people which are present here to offer *willingly* unto thee." 1 Chron. xxix. 9. 10. 14. 17. And at the conclusion of his speech he said unto all the congregation, "Now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads and worshipped the Lord, and the king." Thus unlike the tendency of the coercive system, producing murmurings and discontent, the voluntary system produced satisfaction and thanksgiving.

In the course of years this magnificent temple became dilapidated, when Joash King of Judah being desirous to repair it, sent out a number of Levites into the cities of Judah to make a collection for that object. At the king's commandment Jehoiada the chief priest took a chest, and made a hole in the lid of it, (after the manner of our Missionary boxes) and set it in a public place near the gate of the temple, and all the princes and all the people, rejoiced and brought in, and cast into the chest until they had made an end, 2 Chron. xxiv, 10. "This they did day by day and gathered money in abundance," not by any coercion but by the cheerful energy of the voluntary principle. So also for the rebuilding of the second temple, Cyrus, king of Persia, issued a proclamation to the Jews, to go up to Jerusalem, and build the house of the Lord God

of Israel which is at Jerusalem. Upon this the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin went up to commence the work, and all they that were about them strengthened their hands with gold, silver, goods, beasts, and precious things, "*beside all was willingly offered.*" Ez. i. 6. Artaxerxes king of Persia gave Ezra the priest a brief empowering him to make collections in all the province of Babylon, from them who were *mindful of their own free will to give.* Ezra vii, 11, 16. The voluntary principle sustained them under all the opposition from their enemies, so that the building prospered until the house of the Lord was finished, "and they dedicated it with great joy."

The whole history of the Jewish Polity from Moses to Christ proves that religion was maintained only by the free contributions of the people. And hence the voluntary principle was in active operation in the days of our Lord. Luke informs us, "he looked up and saw the rich men casting their *gifts* into the treasury. And he saw a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God, but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had." Luke xxi, 1, 4.

Having proved that the places of worship were built and repaired by voluntary contributions, we proceed to ascertain from the scriptures the means adopted for the maintenance of the ministers of religion. First, the Jewish priests: they were to have no inheritance among their brethren, but their *livings* were to be the free will offerings of the people. A certain portion of the offerings were to be devoted to the Lord, "and the remainder thereof shall Aaron and his sons eat." See Lev. vi. 16---18. vii. 6---8. The particular portions

of the offerings which were given to the priests are specified, Num. xviii. 8---19. And as Jewish ministers lived by the law; so Christian ministers are to live by the gospel. 1 Cor. ix. 13. 14.

When the only head of the church sent forth his apostles, he instructed them not to provide for themselves, gold, silver or brass; because "the workman is worthy of his meat." Matt. x. 10. And for this reason they were commanded to remain among the people a sufficient time for the discharge of their mission "eating and drinking such things as they give, for the labourer is worthy of his hire." The Apostle Paul declares that "the Lord hath ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." On this ground he claimed his maintenance as a right. "Have we not power to eat or to drink?" have we not a right to such support as will enable us, "to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other Apostles and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas have we not power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and he that thrasheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 1 Cor. ix. 4---11. Another scripture saith "The labourer is worthy of his reward." Paul saith to the Galatians, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."

But though the Apostle insisted on it that the people should support their minister, yet he never urged this right in order to obtain any thing not *voluntarily given*; and he even laboured with his hands rather than he would be burdensome to any church. He was anxious under some circumstances to make the gospel of Christ without charge, that he might not abuse his power in the gospel, and he preferred receiving a voluntary contribution from a distant church, rather than press his just claims among the people where he laboured. "Now, ye Philippians, know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things *that were sent from you*, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God," Phil. iv. 15--18. The above quotations from the sacred scriptures, establish the important fact that the ministers of religion among Jews and primitive Christians were always supported by the free contributions of the people. This voluntary principle, ever lovely in its nature, and the only one equitable in its operation, liberally supports in the present day our most important religious and benevolent institutions; besides respectably maintaining the Christian ministry among the dissenters, notwithstanding the large sums of money which are exacted from them for the upholding of the church by law established. We proceed to observe,

SECONDLY. *That God has not given to any man authority to levy a tax upon the people for the support of religion.* It is the plain duty of every man to render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; but

it is not any man's duty to render unto Cæsar the things that are God's. Taxes to support the civil government belong to Cæsar: contributions to support religion belong to God, and he has not given the civil magistrate any authority or right to impose them. Under the Mosaic economy God required tithes and offerings to be given by the people for the support of the ministers of the sanctuary; but he conferred no power upon the civil authorities, nor upon the priests, to distrain for tithes. A Jew never saw a tithe proctor, nor ever had his goods taken for ecclesiastical dues; all was voluntary; and when tithes were not given, God said to the people, "ye have robbed *me*." They asked, "Wherein have we robbed thee?" He replied, "in tithes and offerings." Yet he did not direct the civil magistrate to enter a process to obtain his arrears of tithes, nor did he use any threatening of *distress*; but promised them on one occasion abundant prosperity for the future, if they would repent and reform. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it," Mal. iii. 10. The amount of ecclesiastical dues was sometimes stated. When the people were numbered they were each to pay half a shekel, (about fifteen pence,) as an offering of the Lord, called the atonement money, and it was appointed for service of the the tabernacle of the congregation. The rich were not to give more, nor the poor to give less. Exod. xxx. 11---16. But God gave no power to the magistrates nor the priests to distrain for the amount of what he had enjoined. The only instance recorded in the sacred scriptures of *force* being employed by the priests, records also the disgrace of the parties concerned, who are called sons of Belial. These sent

their servant to the men that sacrificed, saying, "Give flesh to roast for the priest, for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said unto him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desireth; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now; and if not I will take it *by force*. Wherefore the sin of the young men was *very great* before the Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the Lord," 1 Sam. ii. 16, 17. And if such proceedings were unwarrantable under the old dispensation, they cannot be justified from the New Testament, the genius of which is directly contrary to every kind of human compulsion.

The civil magistrate has no authority from God to kill, imprison, or fine his subjects on account of their religious opinions: nor is it his province to compel them to support his religion, which is but another way of promoting religion by the sword. If any man profess to have this authority, let him show from whence he derives it. But this is a power always assumed by human establishments, whence idolatry is established in Persia and China, the Prelatical form of Christianity in England, Presbyterianism in Scotland, and Popery in Canada; while Dissenters in each of these countries are compelled to contribute towards the support of these religious anomalies. But God has declared his utter abhorrence of compulsory oblations. "I the Lord love judgment, I hate robbery for burnt offerings," Isa. lxi. 8. Now for the purpose of illustration, let us suppose a case. A man meets you on the road and requests you to give him money, you are moved by his tale of woe, willingly give him alms, and then go on your way rejoicing that you have alleviated the distress of a fellow creature. Another man meets you, presents a pistol, and

*demand*s your money; you deliver it up reluctantly, he departs with his booty, and you escape with your life. The former is the effect of the *voluntary principle*, the latter of the *coercive one*. The first is an act of charity, the last of submission to injustice. But it has ever been the plan of the all-wise God to have his religion supported by the voluntary contributions of the people. The Apostle Paul appeals to it as a well known fact, "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers of the altar?" (*which were voluntary offerings.*) Then he adds, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." The Jewish priesthood and Christian ministry are not thus put in comparison with any other view, than a reference to their means of support.

To mention only some of the items towards which Dissenters are compelled to contribute, excites the disgust and contempt of sober minded men; such as for a parish surplice for the parson, and the washing of it when it is dirty; for ringing the bells to call the congregation to prayers, and for saying Amen, when they have done; and for sweeping the church and the church yard; but to stamp the coercive system with infamy, and its abettors with disgrace, Churchmen compel the Dissenters to contribute to the purchase of the bread and wine they partake of at the holy sacrament: and if the nonconformist refuses to pay, the magistrate signs a warrant of distress,---the goods of the Dissenter are seized and sold, and he is not only compelled to pay the church rate, but also the expences incurred by the seizure, or go to prison. Would there not be quite as much appearance of equity in compelling the Dissenters to contri-

bute towards buying the Clergyman a new shirt, and towards the expence of washing it, as in the case of the surplice? or as much equity in forcing the Dissenters to contribute towards the bread and wine which the Clergyman and his church-going parishioners take at their own tables, as to compel them to do so, for that which they take at the Lord's table? Is it not just matter of surprise that pious and enlightened Churchmen can persuade themselves that God is pleased with such extorted sacrifices as these? Another thing we deem equally absurd is the ringing of bells at certain hours of prayer when nobody goes to worship. In former times there used to be three separate services performed on a Sunday morning, that which is called "The Morning service" is supposed to have commenced at eight o'clock, "The Litany" at nine, and "The Communion service" at eleven. Now as the Dissenters help to pay for the ringing of the bells, it is found more easy to keep up this ringing part of the ceremony at the canonical hours, than to go to prayers. But it seems it is not one bell nor two, that can draw the people to church at these early hours; they must have chiming, a sermon bell, and a ting-tang, then at eleven o'clock they go and "*huddle*"* all the three services together, and when the service is ended, in many places two bells are rung, *paid by the same parties*, that the servants may be prepared to open the doors and receive their superiors respectfully. Is it reasonable that those who conscientiously dissent from the established Church should contribute towards this species of profanation of sacred time!

* This is very appropriate episcopal language, for "Bishop Cosin hath more than once remonstrated against what he calls *huddling* the offices." See, "Free and candid disquisition relating to the Church of England," drawn up by dutiful sons of the said Church. p. 34. An excellent work that ought to be re-published and attentively read by all the members of the Established Church.

For it often happens under this mask of religion, that there is more sabbath breaking committed in the belfry than in all the parish besides. We observe,

THIRDLY. *That God alone has authority to punish those who withhold that which he claims for the support of religion.* He only is the lawgiver and judge. He has given us a code of laws, and no man has a right to add to, or alter it. To suppose that we can improve his institutions by the invasion of his authority, is, to impeach his wisdom and grace, and every such attempt is an act of daring impiety. He has no where given to any man authority to levy fines, or to inflict corporal punishments on those who refuse to pay ecclesiastical dues, or who even manifest enmity to his church; nor to take vengeance on pecuniary delinquents. His law commands us to love our enemies, and to pray for them, and to do them good: but forbids us to punish by fines or imprisonment. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him: if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." God has power to punish; and he has reserved the right to himself, and he will certainly punish; but if he choose to delay, who has a right to interfere? When Nadab and Abihu profaned the sanctuary by offering strange fire, no civil or ecclesiastical officer was employed to punish. There went out fire *from the Lord* and devoured them, and they died before the Lord, Lev. x. 2. When Miriam spoke against Moses, the Lord rebuked her by leprosy. When Korah, Dathan and Abiram violated the law of the priesthood, he did not order Moses or Aaron to punish them, but took the rebels into his own hand, and inflicted

summary justice. "The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and they perished from the congregation," Num. xvi. 31---33. When Jonah refused to go to Nineveh, the Lord corrected him in his own way. When Israel rebelled against him, he sent them his "four sore judgments, the *sword*, the *famine*, the *noisome beasts*, and the *pestilence*." So under the gospel, when Ananias and Sapphira withheld a portion of the property which they professed to devote to the service of the church, and concerning which they lied to the Holy Ghost, the Lord himself inflicted the punishment.

The voluntary and compulsory plans of supporting religion have both been put to the test of experience. The former has had for ages to struggle against the strong arm of power, yet the latter with all its apparatus of human laws, immense wealth, and royal favour, has not produced half the beneficial results to immortal souls. Witness the Bible society, which has by the aid of voluntary contributions, circulated *fifteen millions* of copies of the sacred scriptures; and the various Missionary societies, which by the operation of the same principle, have sent out the heralds of salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth. The voluntary system is like the harmless lamb, bleating for its mother's milk, but the compulsory system is like the wolf of the forest seeking after his prey. The latter is founded in error. It acts on the mistaken principle that the church has power to decree rites and ceremonies. The church (that is to say the clergy,) acting upon its usurped authority, ordains them at pleasure, and then prevails upon the legislature to pass an act to enforce them by penal sanctions, and thus the compulsory system amplified in a variety of unrighteous laws has been productive of the most dreadful sufferings, and has shed torrents of

human blood, both prior and subsequent to the Reformation. It perpetrated the massacres of St. Bartholomew---kindled the fires in Smithfield, and burned the Bishops at Oxford. It impelled Episcopalians and Presbyterians to persecute each other to fines, imprisonments and death. It dictated the act of uniformity which ejected 2000 of the best ministers of the church of England, and which still remains a disgrace to the statute book. That detestable act is even a greater grievance to pious clergymen than any thing Dissenters are now suffering from its tyranny, which grievance is stated very forcibly in a letter to the members of both houses of parliament, by a late Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. "Bestow not then my Lords and Gentlemen, all your compassion on the Dissenters, who for want of greater cause of complaint are straining at a gnat; but have some for the ministers of the church, who are compelled to swallow a camel." Every drop of the blood of the martyrs has been shed by the operation of the coercive system. It compelled King Edward VI. to sign the death warrant of a good woman who differed in some minor points from the established creed. "The compassionate young king not being able to prevail with himself to sign the warrant for her execution, Archbishop Cranmer, with his superior learning, was employed to persuade him; he argued from the practice of the Jewish church in stoning blasphemers, and rather silenced his Highness than satisfied him. For at last when he yielded to the archbishop's importunity, he told him with tears in his eyes, That if he did wrong since it was in submission to his authority, *he* must answer for it to God. This struck the archbishop with surprise, yet he suffered the sentence to be executed."* So the magistrates now are bound by

* Neale's History of the Puritans, Vol. 1. p 36.

solemn oaths to see the laws of the country duly executed, however unjust in principle, or cruel in operation. Yet we have many compassionate and upright magistrates, who deeply regret that they are compelled to sign warrants of distress to seize the property of those, who from the best of motives refuse to support a church from which they conscientiously dissent.

TO CONCLUDE: Voluntary contributions for the support of religion are ordained of God---pleasing in his sight---lovely in the eyes of men, and fully adequate to sustain religion at home, and propagate it abroad. The sacred scriptures speak in the highest commendation of the voluntary principle when brought into exercise for the support of religion, but give no countenance to compulsion in sacred things. The law which enforces it, is contrary to the spirit of christianity, and the positive directions of the word of God. “*Every man according AS HE PURPOSETH IN HIS HEART, SO LET HIM GIVE; not grudgingly, or of NECESSITY:*” but when a Church rate is legally made, Dissenters and Churchmen are *compelled*, and must give of *necessity*, or have their goods taken by force. To Christ and to his cause all should be *freely* offered, for God loveth a *cheerful giver*, 2 Cor. ix. 7. The Dissenters universally adopt this principle for the maintenance of religion among themselves; their ministers had rather live in the affection of their congregations, and be supported by their free contributions, than roll in the wealth of archiepiscopal palaces.

THE END.



THE
DANGER OF THE CHURCH.

THE
"DANGER OF THE CHURCH,"
CONSIDERED IN A LETTER
TO A CLERGYMAN OF
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND,
IN THE ISLAND OF JERSEY,

BY
T. JARVIS.

"The Church of Christ may be externally divided without schism, may admit of diversity, without disunion."

"It is the imposition of other tests of union than those which have a relation to the essential unity of the Church, which has been the source of all the mischiefs charged upon diversity of religious opinion." Josiah Conder.

"It is a great fault, that men will call the several sects of Christians by the names of several religions." Bishop Jeremy Taylor.

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1837

REMARKS.

Jersey.

1837.

REV. SIR,

THE following remarks are occasioned by the repeated language of alarm, as expressed by yourself, and others in this island, relative to the destructive designs of Dissenters towards “*the Church*” as “The Church of England” is *emphatically* styled. I deeply regret that fears so imbecile and ill grounded, should be entertained by persons of education and reflection, though I doubt not with a strict regard for truth. It is cause for astonishment that the mere adherence, by Protestant Dissenters, to statements of Christian Doctrines of “*faith or practice*,” as derived simply from the Sacred Scriptures; should excite so much anxiety and distressing fears for what must be considered, as mere frame-work, or as a dignitary of the Church acknowledges *human invention*, for he justly observes “*Civil Ecclesiastical Establishments of Christianity, is no part of Christianity itself.*”^{*} It is also declared by one of the most talented Evangelical Clergymen, that, “neither Our Lord nor his Apostles enjoined a national religious establishment.”[†]

“The Church” of Christ needs not to fear “it has the ‘Munition of rocks’ for its defence, and no power formed against it shall prosper.” The appendages of mere human wisdom, and folly, shall most assuredly be removed,[‡] and the real glory of the Kingdom or Church of Christ, shine forth in all its moral potency and splendour; such a consummation every good man must ardently desire.

^{*} Dr. Paly’s Moral Philosophy.

[†] Dr. Dealtry.

[‡] Matt. 15, 13.

The Protestant Dissenters of the British Empire claiming, the inalienable right of private judgment, dissent from every principle of sacerdotal, or secular domination, in matters of conscience; and from a well attested, but painful, testimony of their sincerity and honesty, they have surrendered all connection with the privileges, and immunities, of the State corporation, called the "Church of England." For thus acting, and in defending their views, you with others charge them with the "*sin of schism*," and "*a desire to pull down the Church*," "*enemies to the Church !*" &c. &c.

Feeling myself implicated in the charge; and having from a deliberate preference, stood connected with a section of the vast and increasing community of Protestant Dissenters, I presume no apology, is necessary for presenting you with a few of those reasons, which dictated that preference, and that it is from an unabated esteem for principles I consider of paramount value, that I am content to sustain the unmeaning and supercilious approbrium of "*schismatic*," "*unauthorised*" and merely *tolerated* teacher of christianity.

By that vile measure of priestly intolerance the "Act of Uniformity," it was enacted. "That if any one shall declare or speak any thing in the derogation or depraving of the Book of Common Prayer, he shall, for the first offence, suffer imprisonment one whole year without bail or mainprize; and, for the second offence, shall be imprisoned during life." The Canons declare, that "Whosoever shall hereafter affirm that the Church of England is not a true and an apostolical Church; or, that the form of God's worship contained in the Book of Common Prayer and Administration of Sacraments, containeth any thing that is repugnant to the Scriptures; &c. &c.," or, "Whosoever shall affirm, that it is lawful for any sort of ministers and lay persons, or of either of them, to form together, and make rules, orders, or constitutions in things ecclesiastical, without the King's authority, and shall not submit themselves to be ruled and governed by them; "let them be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and not be restored until they

repent, &c.” So that according to the unrepealed decrees of what its advocates represent as the most tolerant and Catholic of Churches, the whole body of the English Dissenters lie under one sweeping sentence of excommunication, as wicked persons, deserving to be visited with the vengeance of the civil power !” Under the sanction of the above iniquitous law, and the Canons of your Church, thousands endured cruel persecutions.” It is the State only that has become tolerant. No act of the Church has reversed these decrees ; they still formally survive in the exclusive regulations of her colleges, the obligation of her ministers, and the provisions of her ritual.”* Bishop Morton justly observes that “ The Non-conformists have suffered what is next to death, and too many have suffered even unto death ; of whom then shall their deaths be required ?”

In addressing you Rev. Sir, be assured it is not from any wish to increase your fears, or your perturbation of mind, which I grieve to perceive, and hear to be expressed, on the apprehended danger of *your Church*.† Many of your brethern also, and those too, of whom better things might have been expected, indulge opinions, vague and illiberal, respecting the religious character and intentions of men, they know, will

* See more especially, Canon. 27.

† The exclusive language frequently employed, such as “ *our Church* ” &c., is exceedingly inappropriate. The Church establishment is *national* and includes all the various sects, who dissent from it,—mere separation from its worship, is no cause for exclusion, from any of its benefits or managing its affairs, when it may be deemed suitable to any subject of the realm to participate in either. It is pitiful conduct in any—but much more so in professed Christians striving to promote the mere purpose of party, under the plausible pretence of promoting the interests of religion—“ which is first *pure* then *peaceable*.” The excitement on Church rates, &c., in England, is created by just views of supporting the cause of religion, which can only be reasonable, on the principle of participating in its services in that form adopted by the individual.—I acknowledge the “ danger ” in which all compulsory modes of maintaining religion are placed, but for religion itself,—I dare entertain no fears, when “ He who is head over all things for the Church ever liveth and reigneth ” Within the last 18 years not less than between forty and fifty thousand pounds have been expended by the different religious bodies in the erection of Chapels in every parish throughout the island,—And all the result of the voluntary principle !—this may serve to shew the importance and safety of leaving the interests of religion to the free will offerings of the people. When the population and their resources are considered, the *efficiency* as well as the *sufficiency* of the voluntary principle, when applied to the maintenance and extension of Christianity, is amply illustrated and confirmed.

sustain a comparison for patriotism and useful citizenship, with any portion of the body politic.

I am aware of your early associations, and limited means for obtaining information of the dissenting body, or their publications, and which circumstance I conceive will justify the following brief view of the controversy between your Church and those dissenting from it. My long and intimate acquaintance with your estimable character, and conscientious discharge of ministerial duties; press upon my mind too strongly, to admit the use of any expression, except that of sincere respect and Christian esteem:—but you know how important it is in the pursuit after truth, particularly divine truth, that “we know no man after the flesh,” or in the words of an heathen. “*Amicus Plato, Amicus Socrates, sed magis amica veritas.*”

In directing your attention to the subject of these remarks, allow me to express a hope, that no preconceived opinion will be suffered to suppress the force of any truth, elicited by the following observations; however opposed to your former or present opinions; In our attainment of knowledge, how many favorite notions, are found by subsequent investigations inadmissible and worthless! In religious inquiries, you admit, all must be tested by the unerring standard of inspired truth;—but no task more difficult to that mind, sincere in its attachment for what may be valued as religious acquirements, than the abandonment of even any *prejudice*, cherished as religious truth, when discovered to be such.* “Let us,” says an eminent writer, “maintain the sole authority of Scripture in all matters of religious truth and duty, otherwise there can be no end of discussions.” The moment we substitute any other authority than God himself for the doctrines we hold, or the religious duties to which we are obliged, we come under our Lord’s censure. “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.” “God’s word is the sole standard of revealed truth, and the entire rule of christian

* Vide. A Pamphlet on “The Unity of the Church,” by Baptist W. Noel, M. A.

duty, and woe be to those who either add to it or take from it.”*
 “The right of private judgment necessarily follows from the supremacy of God’s word.” For as there is no authorized infallible interpreter, to follow any fallible authorities would be to dishonor the word of God by making them supreme. Being fallible, their judgment may therefore, in some points, oppose the doctrine of Scripture ; and if in those points we take their views instead of the Scripture for our guide, we should oppose it too,—God has given to no man, and to no set of men, this right of supreme decision, so derogatory to the Bible.” “Each of us will be judged by that alone.”†

The self-denying truths of the Gospel are too pungent, for the mere nominal professors, and hence the fondness for those views of Christian profession, which are easy of attainment, and which tend to worldly advantage and aggrandisement. Such inadequate ideas of the design of the Gospel system, may I fear be assigned, as the chief cause of the vociferous and unmeaning cry “the Church is in danger;”—a clamour the more suspicious, inasmuch as it is raised on the side of so vast a preponderance of worldly influence and immunities. The following language of a profound writer‡ may perhaps be more pertinent ; at least, it expresses much more forcibly my own views. “It has frequently,” says he “been said that the Church is in danger.” What is meant by the Church ? Or what is endangered ? Is it meant that the episcopal form of Church government is endangered ;—that some religious re-

* Rev. 22, 18, 19.

† It is refreshing to peruse sentiments so congenial with reason and revelation, the writer of which is one of the most gifted and useful ministers of the Church of England. The doctrine pointedly opposes the high-toned claims of a class of “fierce” men arrogating to themselves the prerogative of infallible interpreters of God’s word, and whilst they themselves are declaiming against the alarming and increasing influence of Popery ; yet are the verriest slaves to the most detestable part of that system.—**ITS SPIRIT.** A general return to the imperative duty of “searching the Scriptures” and cleaving to them as the only “authorized” guide in religion, will ultimately subvert the crafty encroachments on religious freedom, whether made by a mitered and powerful hierarchy—a Presbyterian Synod—a Wesleyan or other conference—or the more insulated dissenting congregational minister—all must submit to the rule of Christ, as revealed in his word, the code of laws, which is alone binding in his own Kingdom or Church.

‡ Jonathan Dymond.

volution is likely to take place, by which a christian community shall be precluded from adopting that internal constitution it thinks best ? This surely cannot be feared. The day is gone by, in England at least, when the abolition of prelacy could become a measure of state. One community has its conference, and another its annual assembly, and another its independency, without any molestation. Who then would molest the English Church because it prefers the government of Bishops, &c., to any other ? Is it meant that the *doctrines* of the Church are endangered, or that its liturgy will be prohibited ? Surely no. Whilst every other Church is allowed to preach what doctrines it pleases, and to use what formulaires it pleases, the liberty will not surely be denied to the Episcopal Church. If the doctrines and government of that Church be Christian and true, there is no fear for their stability. Its members have superabundant ability to defend the truth. What then is it that is endangered ? Of what are those who complain of danger afraid ? Is it meant that its civil immunities are endangered,—that its revenues are endangered ? Is it meant that its members will hereafter have to support their ministers without assistance from other Churches ? Is it feared that there will cease to be such things as rich deaneries and bishopricks ? Is it feared that the members of other Churches will become eligible to the legislature, and that the heads of this Church will not be temporal peers ? In brief, is it feared that this Church will become one amongst the many, with no privileges but such as are common to good citizens and good christians ?—These surely are the things of which they are afraid. It is not for religious truth, but for civil immunities ; It is not for forms of Church government, but for political pre-eminence ; it is not for the Church, but for the Church *establishment*. Let a man then, when he joins in the exclamation, “the Church is in danger,” present to his mind distinct ideas of his meaning, and of the objects of his fears. If his alarm and his sorrow are occasioned not for religion but for politics,—not for the purity and usefulness of the Church

but for its immunities---not for the offices of its ministers, but for their splendours---let him be at peace. There is nothing in all this for which the Christian needs to be in sorrow or in fear. And why? Because all that constitutes a Church as a Christian community, may remain when these things are swept away. There may be prelates without nobility; there may be deans, and archdeacons, without benefices and patronage; there may be pastors without a legal provision; there may be a liturgy without a test. In the sense in which it is manifest that the phrase, "the Church is in danger," is ordinarily to be understood, that is "the *establishment* is in danger"—the fears are undoubtedly well founded; the danger is real and imminent. Supposing the doctrines and government of the Church to be sound, it is probable that its stability would be increased by what is called its destruction. It would then only be detached from that alliance with the state which encumbers it, and weighs it down, and despoils its beauty, and obscures its brightness. Contention for its alliance will eventually be found to illustrate the proposition; that a man's greatest enemies are those of his own household, who is the man that *as a Christian*, regrets its danger or would delay its fall? He may wish to delay it as a politician; he may regret it as an expectant of temporal advantages, but as a Christian he will rejoice. He is the practical enemy of the Church who endeavours the continuance of its connexion with the State. Let him, then, who can discriminate between the Church and its alliances, consider these things. Let him purify and exalt his attachment. If his love to the Church be the love of a Christian, let him avert his eye from every thing that is political, let his hopes and fears be excited only by religion; and let his exertions be directed to that which alone ought to concern a Christian Church, its purity and its usefulness." The length of the foregoing extract, will be excused when the importance of its design is considered. It places in a true light the "*danger*," the apprehension of which afflicts so many worthy persons, and may,

I hope tend to calm those fears, and reduce the cause of so much unnecessary anxiety. The *origin* of the English *establishment* is papal. The political alliance of the Church is similar now to what it was in the first years of Henry 8th. When Henry countenanced the preachers of the reformed opinions, when he presented some of them with the benefices which had hitherto been possessed by the Romish clergy, and when at length these benefices and the other privileges of the State religion were bestowed upon the "reformed" only,—no essential change was effected in the political constitution of the Church. In one point indeed the alliance with the State was made more strict, because the supremacy was transferred from the Pope to the Monarch. So that the same or a kindred political character was put in connexion with other men and new opinions. The Church was altered but the *establishment* remained nearly the same ; or the difference that they did obtain made the establishment more of a State religion than before. The origin therefore of the English establishment is papal. It was planted by papal policy, and nurtured by prevailing superstition ; and as to the transfer of the supremacy, but little credit is due to its origin or its motives. No reverence is due to our establishment on account of its parentage. The *Church* is the offspring of the reformation,—the *Church establishment* is not. It is not a daughter of protestantism but of the papacy,—brought into unnatural alliance with a better faith ; unhappily but little anxiety was shown by some of the reformers to purify the *political* character of the Church when its privileges came into their own hands. They declaimed against the corruptions of the former Church, but were more than sufficiently willing to retain its profits and its power." " Our forefathers did great things, and we cannot be sufficiently thankful for their labours, but much more remains to be done." Dr. Hartly says, of the Ecclesiastical powers of the Christian world,—“ They have *all* left the true, pure, simple religion, and teach for doctrines the commandments of men. They are *all* mer-

chants of the earth, and have set up a kingdom of this world, abounding in riches, temporal power, and external pomp.” “Cranmer, Bucer, Jewel, and others never considered the reformation which took place in their own times as complete.” Long after Cranmer’s days, some of the brightest ornaments of the Church still thought a reformation of the Church was needed. Tillotson, Patrick, Tennison, Kidder,¹ Stillingfleet, Burnet, and others, endeavoured a further reformation though in vain. “We have been, says one, contented to suffer our religious constitution, our doctrines, and ceremonies, and forms of public worship, to remain nearly in the same *unpurged, adulterated, and superstitious state* in which the original reformers left them.” Simpson’s Plea.

The protestant dissenters from the State Church therefore, only carry out more perfectly the principle of the reformation, originated by men, who sought a more pure form of the undefiled religion of Christ, than the papacy presented, —they say in the words of the great Chillingworth—“The bible, the bible alone, is the religion of protestants.” The History of Nonconformity, is in fact, a mere narrative of sufferings endured by a noble minded band of men of whom the age was not worthy, but they resisted to the sacrifice of life and property, the polluting alliance of the truth of “Christ’s Gospel” with the crafty policy of a cruel spiritual domination over mind and conscience. When the word of God became more generally diffused, the “rule” of Scripture, though but partially adhered to, led to more resistance, to the abominations of the “Man of Sin,” and the real friends of God and truth, were through a long and trying period involved in a fearful contest; the most important it is true to the world, but calamitous to themselves.* Much remains to be accom-

* See Brook’s Lives of the Puritans, and Palmer’s Nonconformist’s Memorial. The Revd. Mr. Scott, the Commentator, has made a declaration on this subject which does him the highest honor. Many of the Puritans, he remarks “were factious, ambitious hypocrites; but I must think that the tree of liberty, sober and legitimate liberty, civil and religious, under the shadow of which, we in the establishment, as well as others, repose in peace, and the fruit of which we gather, was planted by the Puritans, and watered, if not by their blood, at least by their tears and sorrows. Yet it is the modern fashion to feed delightfully on the fruit, and then revile, if not curse, those who planted and watered it.” On Separation, &c., 8 vo. London, 1817

plished, ere the pure and simple system of Christ, is disengaged from the errors and corruptions of a system imposed on the world, as the *pure* doctrines of the revealed mind of Christ, to his Church. The spirituality of Christ's kingdom they contended for, as the highest act of integrity to him, and their lives were not reckoned too dear as a testimony to their fidelity.*

“No power,” says Bishop Warburton, “or legislation can be admitted into Christ's Church without making it a worldly kingdom,” and Dr. Whitby observes that “The government of the Christian Church is intirely committed to the Lord Jesus Christ ; and he as supreme Head and Lord of all—governs both it, and all things in earth and heaven for the good of it.” Such are the views which protestant dissenters embrace, and which justify in their minds, their separation from the Church of England as it is constituted, and taken into union with the State, having a political head.† But the following statement will place before you more distinctly their views relative to those things, incorporated with the episcopalian Church and which are not approved by other Churches,—viz:—the Scotch Church, and the foreign reformed Churches—are equally opposed to the episcopalian form of Church government, as the protestant dissenters. “Modern Church Reformers,” in seeking the emancipation of the Episcopalian Church from its state alliance, are only aiming after her real usefulness and purity, they “will carry their point only by peaceful and constitutional means—by enlightening the minds of the public—and by rightly employing their political influence. They are for wronging no man,—defrauding no man—nor inflicting pain on any man. They seek only justice, equality, and the glory of Christ—and those who assert otherwise do but grossly malign them.”‡

* Matt. 23, 10.

† See an excellent work on the Union of Church and State, by the Revd. Mr. Thorn, of Winchester.

‡ Ibid.

With most writers in defence of the Hierarchy it is usually the fashion to represent the security of the throne to depend on the existence of the Church establishment. “*Pro aris et focis*” is the motto for “the cracked tocsin” of alarm, calling up all the ignorance, avarice and superstition, their own indifference have created and perpetuated in the country, by their resisting plans for ameliorating its condition morally and religiously. The *danger* to the Church, is still proclaimed to be greater than ever, but its *real* nature is now more clearly perceived; hence the intelligent, and consequently the calm portion of the people, feel their interests as citizens to be more firmly based, than on the “Union” of any religious sect, with the admirable constitution of King, Lords and Commons. “This essential union of Church and State has been denied, not only by Milton and the puritans, but by Mr. Justice Foster and some other great legal authorities, who maintain that the Ecclesiastical establishment is no integral part of the British Constitution,—that the Ecclesiastical authorities are wholly dependent on the civil,—and that all the temporal power assumed by churchmen, was introduced in the gross darkness which formed the atmosphere of Popery; and is as illegal, in reference to our ancient constitution, as it is unchristian in reference to the Bible.”* The unhappy period in our own History when with the extinction of the Monarchy, the Episcopal Church as an *establishment*, was involved in the same fate, is usually referred to as the result of enmity to the established Church, being necessarily connected, with disapprobation of the monarchical mode of Government. Such reasoning only shows how regardless some men are of historic facts, when determined to promote party purposes. “The execution of Charles,” say an eloquent writer, “was the deed of a faction condemned by the great body of the Puritans, as a criminal severity; but whatever blame they may be supposed to have incurred on account of their conduct to Charles,

* T. Williams’ *Essays on Religious Liberty*. Ess. 5. m.

the merit of restoring Monarchy in his son was all their own. The entire force of the empire was in their hands ; Monk himself of their party ; The parliament, the army, all puritans ; yet were they disinterested enough to call the heir to the throne, and yield the reigns into his hands, with no other stipulation than that of liberty of conscience, which he violated with a baseness and ingratitude peculiar to his character. All the return he made them, for the recovery of his power, consisted in depriving 2000 of their ministers, by the intolerant act of uniformity, and involving the whole body in persecution, by which not less than ten thousand are supposed to have perished in imprisonment and want ; but their patriotism was not to be shaken by these injuries.* Long before the final catastrophe which issued in the King's death, the nation was excited by his own unconstitutional notions of kingly prerogative, and greatly exasperated by the high-churchmen's acts of prelatical cruelty, through that iniquitous engine—the Star Chamber,—increased in its atrocity of crime—by the ungodly temper of Archbishop Land. The cause of real religion, however, was evidently not forgotten during that awful struggle for civil and religious liberty,—at the restoration,—the irreligion and frivolity introduced by Charles and his court, met with a noble and magnanimous repulse by those men of God who when an attempt was made by the “Book of Sports” to legalize the desecration of the Lord's day, and thus hazarding the best interests of the country,—chose rather to suffer a variety of afflictions, with their pious and courageous friends, than bow to the time-serving of a Monarch, whose dynasty soon became extinct, to the unspeakable benefit of these realms.† Such a display of sincere and disinterested attachment to vital religion, was of immense advantage to the country, in demonstrating to the people, that “the Kingdom of God was not in word only,

* Mr. Robert Hall.

† Vide Vaughan's “Stewart's Dynasty.”

but in power." The salutary influence of such conduct is still felt, by the perpetuation of those principles, called dissent, or rather the life-giving influence of *Scriptural* knowledge embodied in those voluntary exertions throughout the empire, and in this island in particular, and which have originated those institutions, essential for adequately suppling the moral and spiritual necessities of the people.

It is well known that our, "Bible Societies," "Religious Tract Societies," "Missionary Societies," "Sunday Schools," &c., sprung up from a zeal not enkindled by these who possessed the largest share of worldly patronage and means of "doing good,"* excuse me in quoting the following observations, by one evidently versed in those exertions necessary for promoting the philanthropic institutions in England, and may I not add *elsewhere*? "I refer," says he, "to a sort of in-

* Who first planned and have since supported the principal missionary associations in England and other parts of the Empire? The Moravians, the Baptists, the Independents, the Methodists.

Who followed slowly in the rear of these exertions? The Church of England.

Who first organised schools for the general education of the poor? Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, and the British and Foreign School Society, supported by the Dissenters.

Who followed the example, when education appeared in danger of becoming wholly sectarian? The Church of England, who adopted Dr. Bell's system, and called her schools the National Schools.

Who carried Sunday-schools to the greatest extent in the first instance? The Dissenters, who still persevere largely in the same good work.

Who originated and chiefly sustained that noble institution, the Bible Society? A Dissenter,—and the Dissenters in general zealously support it, while in many places the Churchmen and clergy rarely take a share in its meetings.

Who began the Tract Society? A Scotch Dissenter, and it is still mainly carried on by Dissenters.

Who began and carried forward the most persevering opposition to Slavery? The Society of Friends, assisted by Wilberforce and others.

Who have been the most strenuous in endeavouring to procure the mitigation of the penal laws? The Society of Friends, who even now never suffer the subject to sleep.

Who have most societies for the relief of the sick in their districts? The Dissenters, and especially the Methodists.

Who have translated the Scriptures into most languages? The Dissenters, particularly the Baptists at Serampore.

Who have evangelized the South Sea Islands, and Caffraria and other places? Chiefly the Independents.

Who have made the most successful efforts preparatory to Christianizing China? The Independents.

Who have been most successful in instructing the West India Negroes? The Baptists and Methodists.

Who have made most efforts to Protestantize France? The Continental Society, composed chiefly of Dissenters.

instinctive recoil from new measures that are designed to promote the intellectual, the moral, or the religious improvement of the public. I appeal to the experience of those philanthropic men who spend their time either in their own neighbourhood, or in "going about, doing good," whether they do not meet with a greater degree of this recoil from works of philanthropy, amongst the teachers and members of the State religion than amongst other men,—and whether the recoil is not the strongest amongst that portion who are reputed to be the most zealous friends of the Church. For when our Philanthropist applies to the members of another Church, their only question perhaps is, will the projected institution be useful to mankind? But when he applies to such a member of the State religion, he considers,—How will it affect the establishment? Will it increase the influence of dissenters? May it not endanger the immunities of the Church? Is it countenanced by our superiors? And when all these and other considerations have been pursued, he very commonly finds something that persuades him that it is most "prudent" not to encourage the proposition." I adopt this delineation not to irritate but to admonish, against a spirit and conduct, that cannot but be injurious to the cause of piety and philanthropy, wherever it prevails, and Sir I am sure that in our different spheres, something more is needed, than the narrow exclusive principle of seeking the interest of a mere party; the state of our teeming population, calls for *union* of effort in lessening the ignorance and crime growing upon us,—and surely the ministers of religion ought not to be found in hostility to the diffusive benevolence of our common christianity, which inculcates forbearance and love; as members of the same family, united professedly to the Saviour, by a vital faith, breathing the same spirit, and walking in the same steps.

The views entertained by protestant dissenters are the result of a free exercise of judgment in the examination of the Scriptures, and though opposed to the constitution of your

Church, cannot, or should not, preclude the utmost cordiality in spirit and action in works of benevolence and moral improvement. "They hold," says a prelate of your own community, "that no Church has a right to impose an article of faith on any other christian community. *I believe from my heart they are right* ; at least if they be not, he that can refute them is a much abler man than myself. Now, my Lords, these are men that deserve our esteem for their science, their literature, their critical study of the Scriptures, and for their excellent writings either in defending or teaching common christianity ; and my Lords, they have of late stood almost alone in defence of the natural and religious rights of mankind."* This honest and unbiased testimony, "I believe from my heart" to be true, and no less so the following. "If we will open our eyes, we should see that we are beholden to the dissenters for the continuance of a great part of our theological principles. For if the high churchmen had no checks, they would have brought in popery before this time. So that if there had been no Dissenters, the Church of England had been long since ruined."†

It is certain that Dissenters hold sentiments inimical to a state *establishment* of Christianity, as is forcibly expressed by a Clergyman of the establishment itself. "Religious establishments," says he, "in general have been productive of more dismal effects to society and mankind, than could possibly have arisen from an absolute disregard to religious opinions by the civil magistrate, and a total silence of the law upon that head."‡

Protestant Dissenters object to, as contrary to the New Testament, "most of your officers as being of *Popish origin*, such as Arch-bishops, and twenty-four Baron-bishops, besides Deans, Prebendaries, Canons, Minor Canons, Chancellors, Proctors, Vicar's-General, Commissaries, Officials-Surrogates, &c., &c. These officers not being appointed by Christ, nor

* Bishops Shipsley's Speech in the House of Lords.

† Revd. Dr. Edward's Preacher. 2 vol.

‡ Rev. Mr. Foster, Rector of Colchester.

in any way sanctioned by the inspired records are rejected in the constitution of dissenting Churches—they are of opinion that it is a congregation or voluntary society of believers, who commonly meet together to participate in Gospel ordinances. Rom. 16, 5, 1 Cor. 16, 1, Philemon 2. Hence they think every such society has a right to transact its own affairs, according to the judgment and conscience of every member thereof, independently of any other society of men whatsoever, or without being accountable to any but Jesus-Christ, or restrained by any laws but his. The Church of England differs from this, in that it is not a voluntary society, the whole nation being considered as members of it whether professedly so or not. In ecclesiastical affairs the people have no voice, being obliged to an absolute uniformity in faith, worship, and discipline. It is framed by human authority; its laws are founded on Acts of Parliament, and enforced by civil sanctions, and the chief magistrate as such, is its supreme head. Dissenters think with the Reformers, that there are only two officers in a Christian Church, viz. Bishops and Deacons. Phill. 1, 1. The Bishops mentioned in the New Testament were pastors of particular Churches or congregations and are often called Elders and Presbyters. The Deacons spoken of in the Scriptures, are not Ministers of the Gospel exclusively, but temporal officers, appointed to take care of the poor, Acts 4.*

Dissenters are of opinion that every man who is qualified for the ministerial office, by ability and piety, has a right to exercise it in any society that calls him to it, and that ordination is by no means necessary to the useful discharge of it, but they think it right when they are about to settle with any people as pastors, to have the approbation, the prayers and advice of some of their brethren, who pretend to no authority

* The testimonies of Cranmer and Tyndal, Lambert and Baines, who sealed the reformed faith with their blood, are extant in the "*Healing Attempt*." They are to the following effect: that "there were but now two officers of Divine institution in the Church, viz. elders or bishops to feed the flock, and deacons to minister the charity of the Church to the poor and needy." The bishops and priests were at one time, and were not two things, but both one office in the beginning of Christ's religion" Archbishop Cranmer

to constitute them pastors ; that being derived solely from Christ, and the choice of the people. They therefore, object to the dominion assumed by the Bishops, over the other Ministers,—to the pomp and parade observed in clerical ordination,—to the pretence of conferring the spirit by the imposition of hands, saying “ Receive the Holy Ghost.”

Dissenters prefer free or extempore prayer, therefore their Ministers use no Liturgy or prescribed form of prayer. On several accounts they object to the Common Prayer Book, because, 1st. They think it tends to promote indolence in Ministers, so far as it prevents the exercise of their faculties. 2nd. The constant repetition of the same things tends to deaden the affections of the worshippers, and promotes formality. 3rd. Liturgies cannot be adapted to all the circumstances of different societies, and the several events which may occur, and which ought to be noticed in public prayer.*

Dissenters disapprove of the imposition of ceremonies in divine worship, which are of mere human invention, because they consider nothing is binding upon them to believe or to observe, but what is enjoined and practised in the Holy Scriptures. They deny the authority which the Church of England assumes in her 20th. Article, “ to decree rites and

* “ Far be it the insinuation, that the use of forms is not perfectly compatible with the most exalted spirit of devotion ; but when, in self-defence, the advocates of extemporaneous services are called upon to vindicate their preference of a method against which are brought so formidable objections, it becomes necessary to institute a comparison between the respective tendency of the opposite modes. The public services of the Nonconformists, may not be in all respects acceptable to men of taste ; nor is it, perhaps, possible, or even desirable that they should be, since men of taste form a very inconsiderable proportion of those who receive the Gospel of Christ. But we may be well assured, that neither the prevalence of prayer, nor its spiritual efficacy is, in the slightest degree, affected by such a circumstance as this. The mere emotions of taste have, on the contrary, no similar connexion with the moral principles of our nature. They terminate upon self. The pomp of gothic aisles, the dim religious light, the thrilling chaunt and deep underswell of the organ, “ the painted altar, and the white-robed priest”—all that constituted Popery, the religion of poetry and of the arts,—all that Protestant Episcopacy still cherishes in her Cathedrals,—these solemnize the imagination ; but do they encourage one benevolent feeling ? Do they not rather tend to abstract the individual from those around him, to elevate him in all the self-sufficiency of intellect above the distasteful sphere of ordinary realities, to enclose him within his own feelings, so as to counteract the design of social worship ? And is not the Prayer-Book, in too many cases, an accessory to that refined sentimental semblance of devotion, with which individuals love to soothe their consciences, who would startle at the unaccustomed tones of genuine prayer ?” Conder on Nonconformity.

ceremonies in divine worship," and consider themselves therefore bound to refuse compliance with them—of this description are—1st. Worshipping towards the East. 2nd. Bowing at the name of Jesus. 3rd. Signing with a cross in baptism. 4th. Particular gestures in Worship, especially kneeling at the Lord's Supper. They object also to the wearing of particular garments by the Clergy*—observing certain days as holy,—the distinction of places said to be consecrated, &c. &c.

In the office of Baptism, expressions are used concerning the efficacy of that rite, as naturally leads persons to conceive that it is a saving ordinance, that the child is *regenerated*—

* Protestant Dissenters as a body, have abandoned the use of gowns or any distinguishing dress, as ministers of the Gospel; and the partial use of them, indeed the writer, is convinced, tends only to foster ignorant prejudices, and weakens the general argument of protestants against popery; from whence they undoubtedly originated. The meretricious arts of the "Old Lady" "*arrayed in purple and scarlet*" may appear in character, but let not her *sturdy* opponents, ape any part of her vain and abominable hypocrisy. How the least semblance to her antichristian deformity, could be tolerated by a community, recognizing a delineation the most minute and determined by the Fathers of their Church, is passing strange! See the third part of the Homily against Idolatry, page 216, 4th Ed. Oxford. Bishop Hooper, objected strongly to the "trappings of public worship" and "Cranmer" had he entertained more correct views of religious liberty, would have opposed his being sent to the "Fleet" seeing "the man" could not be brought to any conformity deeming as he did "that nothing could be safely adopted without the sanction of Scripture." A modern high Churchman remarks with an air of sufficient flippancy on the above circumstance:—"According to our modern notions" he says "the only way of dealing with such an *incorrigible* non-conformist would be, to give up all further thoughts of making the *man* a bishop."* The "*nolo-episcopari*" was, in Hooper's case, not the utterance of "fained lips" or "voluntary humility" as in "modern" days. The manner and spirit manifested by the writer alluded to, on the dissenterism of the "*incorrigible non-conformist*" is strongly indicative of the temper with which the "incorrigibles" would be treated, if the strong arm of the *civil* power did not restrain the persecuting tendencies of a State Clergy. A writer who could mention the venerated name of "Bishop Hooper" the Martyr, with a supercilious contempt for the conscientious scruples of "*the man*" who sealed the truth with his blood, evinces a partiality for "conformity" that utterly disqualifies him for the office of discriminating and developing those pure principles and motives, that guided and influenced those holy men; who lived amidst the compromising and time-serving hirelings to a corrupt and antichristian system of policy, in the union of Church and State. Cranmer evinced little or none of that intrepid, and unflinching boldness in the cause of his divine master, which Hooper, Latimer and Ridley so admirably displayed;—He loitered on the road to martyrdom being encumbered with the vain but paramount desire of obtaining royal clemency, and the forlorn aid of "*canon law*;" but his three more noble contemporaries went cheerfully on under the influence of a holy and simple confidence in God and truth,—"*Come on brother,*" says one when going to the stake, "*we shall light a flame in England this day, which shall never be extinguished!*" an almost prophetic truth—more and more developed, as biblical knowledge gains ascendancy over the reign of spiritual despotism and ignorance, in the vain and inglorious crusade against the civil and religious liberties of mankind.

* The Revd. C. Webb Le Brass, M. A. Life of Archbishop Cranmer.

and, therefore made by baptism “a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.” A sentiment it is to be feared, destructive to the souls of thousands. Many expressions in the “*Burial Service*” are seriously objected to, being used for all without distinction of character. “I am afraid” says the learned Abraham Tucker “that the expressions employed in the Catechism leave a notion in some people of *something divine* infused into the elements.”

From these reasons you will perceive that the Dissenters separate from the Church of England not from a fondness for singularity or caprice ; but the extension and further efficiency of those principles, cherished by the reformers, and for which thousands have suffered the loss of life and “all things,” and the Church of Christ can never shine forth in her own glory, until disentangled from the impure interferences of unsanctified wisdom and carnal policy. “The history of the last eighteen centuries does, indeed, afford, in various ways, a strong presumptive evidence, that the cause of true christianity has very materially suffered in the world, in consequence of the connexion between the Church and the State. It is probably in great measure the consequence of such an union that the Church has assumed, in almost all christian countries, so secular a character,—that christianity has become so lamentably mixed up with the spirit, maxims, motives, and politics of a vain and evil world. Before its union with the State, our holy religion, flourished with comparative incorruptness ; afterwards it gradually declined in its purity and its power, until all was nearly lost in darkness, superstition, and spiritual tyranny.”* If Dissenters, as some do “slanderosly” affirm, are in league with infidels and radicals in their objecting to all compulsory support of religion, and to the principle of a state religion altogether ; it can only be, as the simple system of christianity, is discovered to be totally silent on the subject, and indeed destitute of any the least sanction, to a state reli-

* See Dymond’s *Essays on Principles of Morality*, &c. 2 vols.

gion.* The man of no predilection for divine revelation, is as competent to discern a biblical fact, as he may be the correctness of any proposition, presented to his mind. It is my deliberate conviction that the crisis is fast approaching when the "ignorance of foolish men,"—the infidelity peculiar to "a form of Godliness, without the power;"†—"bred in the stagnant marches of a corrupt christianity," will receive its final rebuke and ultimate confusion by that invincible demonstration, presented by the *voluntary* and *disinterested* labours of those, who "willingly" stand forward "against the mighty" in the defence and extension of the simple unadulterated truths of Christ—having their minds imbued with a powerful sense of their paramount value to a guilty world. Such an unsophisticated testimony, will alone command a grateful and unreserved esteem for a divine revelation. This moral influence will be sufficiently powerful under God, for saving from its apprehended destruction; the *real* Church of Christ; composed of those only who are drawn unto Him as their Redeemer by the constraining influence of the Holy Spirit; when the corrupted systems of christianity shall be swept away as "wood, hay and stubble," being mixed up with the only divinely appointed means of renovating the world—"the glorious Gospel of the blessed God"—the "pure waters of life" for the healing of the nations.

In closing, I must just remark, that much evil is entailed on the cause of christianity from various writers of Christian theology leaving the New Testament for their sole guidance in reference to the Church of Christ—supposing that the Jewish dispensation of a burdensome ritual is still intended to aid in the form and

* "The State has naturally no concern with religion" observes Bishop Warburton; which remark though startling to many, is clearly explained by Mr. Locke, who says "The business of law is not to provide for the truth of opinions, but for the security and safety of the commonwealth: for Truth certainly would do well enough if she were left to herself. She never has received, and I fear never will receive, much assistance from great men, to whom she is but rarely known, and more rarely welcome. She is not taught by laws, nor has she any need of force to procure her entrance into the minds of men. Errors, indeed, prevail by the aid of borrowed and foreign succours; but if Truth makes her way into the understanding by her own light, she will be but the weaker for any borrowed force which violence can add to her."

† 11 Tim. 3. 5.

construction of Christian Society.* But as the excellent Mr. Scott observes, "God has now unhinged the whole civil and ecclesiastical state of the Jews, and abolished the Mosaic dispensation, in order to make way for the Kingdom of Christ." "Commentary on Heb. 12, 26, 69. See also the learned Dr. John Erskine's Theological Dissertations." Diss. 1 and 2, and Abraham Booth's Essay on the Kingdom of Christ.

The unity of the Christian Church, does not consist in a mere circumscribed circle of Sectarian rules, there may be *unity* without *uniformity*, which many confound. The Church of Christ knows nothing of unity, but what flows from a personal reception of Him as the only head of his Church, "which is his mystical body." The visibility† given to its reality, is by a conformity to his laws. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you," "hereby shall men know that ye are my disciples if ye love one another."‡ The liberal, but scriptural language adopted by the present Bishop of Norwich,§ is worthy of notice. "Let no man," he observes,

* A Pamphlet recently published by the Revd. Ph. Filleul, M. A., on the "indivisibility of the Church," goes upon the erroneous principle of assuming, that as the peculiar national form of the Jewish Church, which was a Theocracy, or in other words a government over which God presided *himself*, was *once* divinely established, it is sufficient authority for adopting it, as the model of the Christian Church,—notwithstanding the positive declaration of inspired truth, to the contrary. Heb. 8, 13.—Gal. 5, 1.—John 4, 19—24.

† The notion, says a sensible writer, of a visible Catholic Church, as a political institution, was the offspring of that monstrous system of errors, which so soon began to overspread the Church of Christ, after its alliance to secular power, and which ended in nearly extinguishing the light of Christianity. The Church of Rome dealt largely in visibilities. It had a visible head, and therefore a visible unity under that head; visible alters, visible sacrifices; it made the Saviour visible; nay it ventured so far in impiety, as to represent in the painting which adorned its temples, the Deity himself as visible!! "They be two things," remarks Lord Bacon, "*unity* and *uniformity*, with regard to the Catholic or Universal Church, absolute uniformity is a thing impossible"—again, "neither outward rites nor forms of polity, nor human creeds, in respect of which this uniformity is required, belong to the essence of religion, or to the essential nature of the Church as a visible religious Society." Seeing, says the *judicious* Hooker, "that Church is a word devised to *sever* and *distinguish* that society of men which professeth the true religion, from the rest which profess it not, we must define the Church, which is a religious society." The true dissenting definition of a Church. "There is far less diversity of religious opinion among the orthodox dissidents from the Church of England, than among those who subscribe to her standard of uniformity."*

* "Conder on Protestant Nonconformity."

‡ John 13, 35. Ibid 15, 14.

§ Dr. Stanley. A Sermon preached at his recent Installation

“think himself free from schism because of outward form; there might be unity of spirit, without unity of form; let no man accuse his neighbour of schism because he was a dissenter from his creed; he alone is the schismatic who creates feuds in the Church of Christ.”—“He who separated from the Church in consequence of conscientious belief was no more guilty of schism, than he who conscientiously remained a member of it,—and before they complained of schism, they must first learn what schism was.”* Such sentiments will if generally cultivated, be as a healing remedy for the unhappy temper and conduct created and inflamed by “men of corrupt minds” “bearing false witness,” to subserve the mere interests of party and their own unhallowed designs. The publications of such unprincipled scribblers,—are I fear too much encouraged by those who I feel persuaded are not aware of the men, or the full extent of mischief produced to the sacred cause of piety and christian charity. Let the following, be the model of our spirit and conduct,—and I am sure our lives, will then promote the legitimate object of our high vocation in the world and in the Church of Christ.

“Let us bear in mind” says the eminent Clergyman of your

* No two words have been more cruelly tortured than the terms “Schism” and “Heresy.” They have been the ecclesiastical *scarecrows* for ages, and made subservient to the vilest propensities of a studied hypocrisy and spiritual despotism,—tempers the most “sensual and devilish” have been cherished, whilst professing an anxiety for the salvation of souls!—a motive the most sublime—but which as been appropriated to the ungodly purpose of perpetrating deeds of cruelty revolting to humanity itself. A mass of gross corruptions and impiety, have thus been accumulated,—the discovery of which, now agitates and disgusts the enlightened and thinking portion of the population of all Christendom. The learned and judicious Dissertations on the words “Schism” and “Heresy” by Dr. Campbell, claim from every biblical student the most careful perusal, and cannot fail of imparting correct views of their scriptural application, and remove errors too commonly entertained on subjects of great importance to understand. If the following closing remarks of the learned critic, were adopted, expressions the most remote from inspired truth, would be withdrawn from the vocabulary of christian ministers. “I shall conclude,” he says, “with adding to the observations on the words *schism* and *heresy*, that how much soever of a schismatical or heretical spirit, in the apostolic sense of the terms may have contributed to the formation of the different sects into which the christian world is at present divided; no person who, in the spirit of candour and charity, adheres to that which, to the best of his judgment, is right, though in this opinion he should be mistaken, is, in the scriptural sense, neither schismatic or heretic, and that he, on the contrary, whatever sect he belongs to, is more entitled to these odious appellations, who is most apt to throw the imputation upon others. Both terms, for they denote only different degrees of the same bad quality, *always indicate a disposition and practice unfriendly to peace, and harmony.*”

own Church already quoted "that God has, in his word, told us plainly who are his children and who are not. To deny, against the evidence of Scripture, those to be his children who really are so, is to be guilty of the sin of schism. If a dissenter bears all the foregoing marks of a child of God, and I, overlooking them all, pronounce him to be no member of Christ, because he is no episcopalian, I am, in the sight of God, a schismatic ; I introduce an unscriptural test of Christian character, and am responsible for all the divisions and heart burnings in the Church of God which must follow from my bigotry. As Christians, they have a right to my esteem and brotherly love : they may demand that I honour them, aid them, vindicate them from unjust aspersions, and do all the kind offices which naturally flow from brotherly love. They are dear to the great Head of the Church, and if, instead of all the esteem and love which is their due, I treat them with unkindness, He who once said to an impetuous enemy of the Gospel, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" will not fail to notice a similar bigotry in one who has less excuse for it."

"Let us not condemn our brethren for a faithful obedience to what they believe to be the will of Christ, as revealed in Scripture.

"If we see in others the marks of grace, we ought, in the absence of proof to the contrary, to believe that, in forming their opinions, they have examined Scripture with as much of care and candour, of humility and love of the truth, as we have ourselves, and consequently are no more criminal for their errors than we are for ours ; perhaps not so much. And since whatsoever is not of faith is sin, they are bound to act according to their conviction of the meaning of Scripture, and instead of blaming them for differing from us, we ought to honour their fidelity. When the missionary Judson, after much examination and prayer, came to the conclusion that infant baptism is contrary to the will of Christ ; and therefore, to be faithful to Christ, hazarded the displeasure of all his

dearest friends, renounced the salary which was his only means of support, and threw himself on the care of God, by joining the Baptist body, he was surely entitled to the admiration and love of his Christian brethren, and instead of being cut off from the Church on that account as a heretic, he ought to have been more esteemed as faithful, and beloved."

"A dissenter, for instance, of devoted piety, may entertain decided objections against the principle of an Establishment. To impute to him, on that account, a hatred to the Church of England, especially if he disclaims it, may be most unjust. He may wish to see the Episcopal Church flourishing in piety and numbers, and may yet hate its connexion with the State because he believes the church to be vitiated, and religion dishonoured by that connexion."

"We should seek friendly intercourse with the best men, of every name. Nothing more tends to exasperate our prejudices, to narrow our minds, and make us deformed and dwarfish creatures, in whom nothing great is to be found, except a swollen and inflamed bigotry, than to read only books of one side, see only men of one party, and collect facts of one complexion. Let us seek the friendship of wise and good men wherever we can find them: let piety alone be a sufficient passport to our hearts. And when we find more worth, wisdom and devotedness than we possess ourselves, in persons of various parties, in high-churchmen, low-churchmen, and dissenters, differing from each other and from us in many of their opinions, we necessarily become humble and tolerant; and can love them as we ought, though they may in some things widely differ from us.

"Let us act with all our brethren in doing what all acknowledge to be right. To circulate the Bible, for instance, at home and abroad, is a work so entirely right, that few pious persons could object to it. To refuse then to associate with our brethren in the discharge of that duty, not because the work itself is wrong, but because men of various denominations combine in it, seems to me a violation of Christian unity. It

is not endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace : it is refusing to testify the brotherly love by which we ought to be known as Christ's disciples ; it is essentially schismatical.

“ But we may do more than this. It tends still more directly to unite Christians, if they associate in the diffusion of acknowledged truths. Real Christians hold many doctrines in common. Let the world see, by their uniting to proclaim them, that they do so far agree. The Religious Tract Society illustrates this. There men, of various denominations, all maintaining various great truths of the Gospel, have in perfect harmony, for many years, laboured to diffuse the knowledge of those truths in which they are agreed ; and they deserve well of the Church of God for their labours. On the points controverted between them they say nothing. On the forms of Church government, and on infant baptism, for instance, they are silent ; nor are they called to mention them. They have an object as distinct and definite, as have the founders of an hospital, or of a provident society. Their known object is not to teach all the truths of the New Testament, for the world well knows that they differ on various points, but to teach those great truths on which they are agreed. Each, separately, may, by other channels, maintain his separate views on controverted points. He conceals no sentiment ; he compromises no truth. But the maintenance of his denominational opinions is not his business there. In this way we may promote Christian unity. By the joint diffusion of all the truths on which we are agreed with our brethren, and by the separate promulgation, in a spirit of moderation and love, of those on which we differ from them ; by which, while no truths are kept from the world, it may yet see in how much Christians are agreed.”

“ Lastly, let us pray for all our brethren, for their prosperity, temporal and spiritual, for themselves, their families, their churches, and their missions. Their gain will be our gain. The more every part of the Church of Christ manifests

his spirit, the more truth will triumph; the more Christians will be united; controversy will lose its bitterness, and error its artificial supports. Rejoice then, my Christian reader, with all your heart, in the grace of God, wherever you may witness it, and pray that the Holy Spirit may speedily render the whole Church of God resplendent in every land with wisdom, holiness, and love; which may God, of his infinite mercy, grant, through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!*"

We have to contend Sir with a mighty foe to our efforts in the cause of benevolence and religion. An inordinate "love to the world and the things of the world" prevade our population, and the increase of irreligion and vice in every form cannot but alarm the friends of virtue and philanthropy, for our peace and happiness as a community. Nothing but "God's saving health," which, is his word, will suffice to effect a radical change.—We literally cannot, and ought not to find time to define *ecclesiastical* rules for action, but let us go forward, in all the unrestricted benevolence of the Gospel, and if Christ be but preached in purity and simplicity,—therein let us rejoice, and resolve to lend our aid to every humble agent in the great work, of "winning souls" to the common Saviour of the human race.

The "state of the world," observes good Mr. Cecil, "is such, and so much depends on action, that every thing seems to say loudly to every man, "Do something"—"Do it"—"Do it."

Wishing you increasing success in your ministerial labours.

I remain, Reverend Sir,

Yours respectfully,

T. J.

* The Revd. Baptist W. Noel, M. A., on "The Unity of the Church." The tracts published by this gifted Clergyman cannot be too extensively circulated.

The CAUSES and REASONS of the present
Declension among the Congregational
Churches in London and the Country,

I N A

LETTER

Addressed to the

Pastors, Deacons and Members

OF THOSE

CHURCHES.

BY ONE OF THAT DENOMINATION.

Interspersed with Reflections on

METHODISM AND SANDIMANIANISM.

Αλαπηλοι, με παντι πνευματι πιστευετε, αλλα δοκιμαζειτε τα πνευ-
ματα, ει εκ τῆ Θεῷ εστιν---I John iv. 1.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. JOHNSON and B. DAVENPORT, in
Pater-noster-row. 1766.



A

LETTER, &c.

BRETHREN,

PERMIT one of your hearty friends, to set before you, the general state of your denomination. He has no other view in writing this epistle, than the revival of that faith and discipline, which he thinks most conformable to the New Testament. The true congregational church order, is what he thinks most conformable to the gospel, best calculated to support true liberty, and best suited to the edification of Christians in faith and holiness. Let me beseech you then to read my Letter patiently, and if I have, upon the whole, given

B a just

a just representation of things among us, let me be heard, if not, condemned.

Your assemblies in London and the country are much shattered ; I apprehend by two sects, the Methodists and Glassites. In *several*, separations have already taken place, in *more* the contention is begun. So that between these two monsters, you are very near being devoured.

Some of your ministers have already left you, *more* are branded with the mark of the northern heresy ; and the violent measures pursued against them, will oblige them, if not stopped, to drop all connexions with you. These, let me tell you, are not some of the least considerable for integrity and ability neither, as many of you know. Besides this, numbers of the most sensible laymen among us have their eyes open to conviction—read and examine, and are apprehensive, they have been too long in the clouds of Mysticism and Quakerism, and are now desirous of breathing in a clearer air.

Our

Our artful priests perceive the leaven operating and spreading in town and country, in spite of their solemn censures, and most violent attempts to restrain it. Their interest and influence is in danger. Their popularity affected with a deep and dangerous wound; and instead of endeavouring to heal it, by the gentle remedies of acknowledgment, argument, and conviction, they apply the desperate caustics of passion and anathema.

Amidst these debates, the Glaslites strive with the malecontents; tell them, the apostolic authority can only be followed amongst themselves, and that there is no such thing as walking according to the commandments of Jesus Christ, in any other societies but their own. And after applying certain passages of the revelation to themselves, they maintain, that they are the only persons who keep the word of God, and the testimony of Jesus Christ; and that all other ministers and churches but theirs, are antichristian. As soon as the candidates have heated themselves with a blaze of

zeal, which the opposition they have met with is good fuel for, to condemn all other Christians, (the principal and most distinguishing qualification required) they become stanch Glassites; and are likely to continue so, as they can worship with no other Christians, without being excommunicated ipso facto. A fine maxim of policy!—Whether these remarks are true or not, I leave the Glassites and you to judge. I can prove they are, from facts, or else I never was more mistaken.

But to my point—Upon reflection, it appears to me, that the declension, fickleness, and confusion, which have taken place amongst us, are owing chiefly to the following causes.

First,

To the influence of Methodism.

Whatever people may say to the contrary, this has been very injurious to the dissenting interest. By the dissenting interest, I mean a separation from the established church for conscience

conscience sake, and out of regard to certain principles and practices, which appear to us scriptural. And I apprehend it can only be maintained, by a full conviction of those principles and a strict observance of those practices, in united assemblies *.

Methodism, as far as I am able to judge, in every form of it, is quite opposite to this conviction and unity. Mr. J—n W—y's principles as professed in several towns of this kingdom, are nothing less nor more, one thing alone excepted, than Quakerism veiled, and I fear, with no slender covering of jesuiti-

* As for those dissenters who consider their denomination as a political faction, I leave them to defend it. Many of the dissenting ministers have complained bitterly, in many of their performances, of the severity of admission into the established church, by subscription and a solemn oath. Especially as the articles now stand. I object to all manner of human imposition as much as they. But when I see them expressing their wishes, that the terms were more moderate, I think 'tis no difficult matter to understand them. They want livings, to be independent of their people. But are these the sons of liberty, that would deprive the people of election or rejection?

cal policy *. That this grand leader of a sect is not sincere, I would not take upon me absolutely to assert, as God only is judge of the heart. But how he can approve of such works of grace upon the soul, as I can demonstrate by the most indubitable evidences he has approved, treating them as the genuine productions of the Holy Ghost, I am at a loss to reconcile, in him a man of some learning and acuteness, with any principles of common honour or honesty. But 'tis to himself whether he stands or falls in the judgment of a higher being, to whom I leave him. I would not hurt a hair of his head. Let him, I say, have his full liberty to go on proselyting. I will maintain my right of judging of every man's overt actions and sayings.

As for Mr. W—f—d's party, and his adherents among the clergy, they are most

* The thing excepted above is priestcraft. And if positivity, imperiousness, subtilty, impatience of contradiction, and an avowed right of dictating in every thing concerning his preachers and societies, be priestcraft, reader, I can tell thee of no character that abounds more with it.

certainly

certainly a set of people, more governed by strong feelings than plain scripture sentiments. Their faith appears too evidently to be something different from a belief of scripture truth, and their edification, placed too much, in strong bodily sensations.

The scripture of truth, is treated by them as a dead letter, a vain ineffectual thing; and regeneration, as nothing more than a positive infusion of a certain something within; which, like Robert Barclay's divine light, is felt, but cannot be explained.

It will justly be demanded, how I came by this opinion of Methodism? I answer, by reading the writings, hearing the sermons, and conversing with the followers, of the two great leaders of this sect. I have always observed the latter to be, a sure method of knowing the spirit and tendency of the religion professed amongst any party. In their books it appears in its most favourable and engaging aspect; but in conversation with their steady adherents and warmest supporters, it is discovered in its morning dress and true state, undisguised: Especially
when

when one converses not only with the weak, but the strong, which, in justice to every party, we ought.

But whether this account of them be true or not, their irregularities in attending divine worship, are too manifest to be denied.

The novelty of a voice—the multitude of attendants—or the gestures of a noted preacher—these, these are the grand rules of edification. Their stated places are left on a Lord's day, they run hither and thither, just as report or fancy lead them; and 'tis very seldom you can find them settled in one place, to one people, and one ministry, for any continuance.

The whole of religion seems with many of them to consist, in a few devout raptures, the hearing of two sermons every day, a good deal of gossiping about conversions, manifestations, the heavenly gift, Pisgah views of Christ and glory, and the condemning other Christians for dulness and lukewarmness. Whilst at the same time, reading the bible, instructing their children, regulating their household, the being diligent

gent in business serving the Lord, and the cultivating the temper and character according to the commandments of Christ in the several relations of life, are rather deemed low and trifling things, of no great moment in the Christian profession.

The writer of this letter appeals to the London ministers for the proof of these observations. He dares venture to affirm, that they have long since discovered, the things he has mentioned, to be truly characteristic of Methodism in general.—And he might presume to ask them, whether they have not known some considerable congregations blown into irreconcilable parties by the impetuous wind of methodistic zeal? Have not many of your hearers left you, and *as many* been rendered inconstant, by this moral contagion? You must know, many of you, that it has devoured your assemblies, like a desperate consumption, and left you but a mere skeleton of a church and congregation. For more than twenty years past, it has thinned your auditories, broke in upon the order of your churches, and infected

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numbers

numbers of your hearers with a phrenfical kind of zeal, that has raifed them above fentiment and inftruction.

I doubt not but there are numbers of ferious perfons among the Methodifts, and am affured that their preachers have raifed deep concern in vaft numbers, who were thoughtlefs about God and futurity. But I am as certainly affured, that this concern and ferious attention, have been directed in general, to the cultivation of a different religion from that contained in the New Testament.

Secondly,

Another reafon of that declenfion and confufion which fubfifts in our affemblies, is the noify-empty popularity of fome of our preachers.

Sound, without fenfe—gesture, without meaning—heat, without light or fentiment—and a peculiar favoury canting tone, that affects numbers of ignorant people in the fame powerful manner, as the *By ob!* of the nurfe does the infant in the cradle—
these,

these, these have been the distinguishing qualifications of some of the most popular men amongst us, especially in the great city.

We see the effect of this kind of preaching, not only in the characters of the zealous hearers, whilst their favourite man lives, but it is more visible still, if he happens to die. Then they are scattered hither and thither, having lost the charm ; and a man of the very same principles and of better learning, sense, and a more uniform character, is totally disregarded as not having the spirit, because God has not given him the same brazen lungs as his predecessor had.

Thirdly,

The systematic Aristotelian way of preaching, is another cause of our disorder.

I know every man must have a system. Paul evidently had in his epistle to the Romans. But every man of sense will see that his is of a very different form, from that of a Mark or a Turretine. In his there is nothing metaphysical. Nothing of occult qualities.

No curious distinctions about the order of nature and order of time. No absurd definitions and splittings of the indivisible principle the soul and its operations. Not a syllable of acts and mystic principles within. No distinctions without a difference. But all is plain, popular, and in language that is easy to be understood.

In his writings we never find the silly distinction between the knowledge of the head, and that of the heart, as if man had two souls, one in his head and the other in his belly. Nor does he insist much, or at all, upon the Aristotelian distinction of speculative and practical knowledge. In the view of the apostles, if men that profess the Christian religion do not walk as Christ walked, the truth is not in them, neither speculatively, nor practically, nor mystically *.

None of the important doctrines of the gospel are uninfluential. They are not

* Can we believe any principles really and fully, without being affected by them, (while the attention of the mind is fixed upon them) according to their real nature and tendency? Let every man examine his own mind, and he'll soon determine this question.

viewed aright, but corrupted, if they do not purify the conscience. There is, as the celebrated Bengelius says, in his *Gnomon*, a salutary virtue always goes with them: If they are from God, they must be doctrines according to godliness.

Besides, according to the systematic way of preaching that I am exploding, the preacher has a principal regard, when he takes his text, to what his favourite system says, and not to the scope and intention of the sacred writer. His proofs and arguments are from thence, and the grand design of the inspired paragraph is soon lost, if ever mentioned. In short, when I hear a man that has drawn his sentiments from his own perusal of the scripture, concerning the universal degeneracy of human nature, and our restoration to the favour and likeness of God, 'by the influence of the Holy Ghost through the conviction of gospel truth, there appears to me to be as much difference between his style and manner of representing subjects, and that of the scholastic systematic, as there is (pardon the comparison) between the walk
of

of the most easy unaffected young gentleman in St. James's Park, and that of a decrepit old prisoner, crawling and twisting along within the walls of Newgate with his chains trailing after him.

I forbear to mention the confounding multiplicity of divisions—the spinning out a plain subject to a most tedious length—the dry verbal criticism—the lifeless and stiff delivery—all which are too common and notorious in many of our preachers. I pass on to another cause of our present disorders.

Fourthly,

The neglect of our discipline.

Our churches are like fields, or cities without walls.—The terms of admission have been neither scriptural, distinguishing, nor calculated to promote unity or mutual edification. A long story about the dealings of God with the soul—in the breaking of jack-lines—losing and getting in trade—in the overturning of hackney coaches—in visions—dreams—secret whispers of the spirit
to

to the soul—in the powerful impresson, but presumptuous application, of texts of scripture—in deep debasings and high exaltings of the soul, and then, to add no more, in its finally rolling itself upon Christ by a wonderful effort: a relation of this kind, I say, which any designing person could imitate, has been the grand criterion of church communion. Not that I would have you think I despise the least incidents in life, which providence might use as excitements to serious attention, and as introductory to the knowledge of the truth. Nor would I be understood to despise all feeling and fervor and heart work in religion. What I reject and condemn, is the laying a stress upon any circumstances or inward feelings whatsoever, short of the saving knowledge of Jesus, and the genuine influence of it upon the heart and life.

Instead of asking candidates, What views they had of themselves and the redemption of Jesus, and what the influence of them upon the temper and life? the grand stress

has

has been laid upon inward workings and certain kinds of feelings.

Now any man that has ever thought at all about futurity, let him be ever so ignorant of Christianity, will have a long story to tell, about his qualms and fears, his restraints and falls, his elevations and hopes. A Jew, or Turk, or Pagan, that has his God and his standard of worship, will ever have something of this kind to relate. And according to his agitations and elevations, or his depressions and coolness, he'll think himself better or worse, influenced by the spirit of his God, or not. Therefore any kind of inward workings whatsoever, without the knowledge of the truth as in Jesus, ought not to be a proper term for Christian communion.

The workings of mens hearts are best known to us by their professed faith and practice.

The neglect of church discipline has been too manifest also, in the partiality that has been shewn to the rich. A rich man, a great subscriber, has never been reprov'd
for

for his irregularities. His measures and conduct, let them have been ever so contrary to the laws of Christ, have been connived at for fear of losing the subscription. One or two of these in a church, have by degrees carried all before them. Ministers have made them their principal counsellors. Hereupon, perhaps, they have enlarged their contributions. Next they have become officers. Then they have commenced devout Bashaws, “ This measure must not be followed, that must.” A poor brother of sense, soundness in the faith, and of a good character, calmly remonstrates, “ He is saucy and impertinent, quarrelsome and litigious, and is asked, What he subscribes ?” As if it was taken for granted, that the influence and authority of a man in a Christian church, should be just in proportion to the weight of his purse. Am I describing a fact or a fiction ? Are there any such instances or not ? Judge ye, my brethren.

That law of Jesus, Matt. xviii. 15. and following verses, without which christianity can never be supported in churches, has

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been

been almost totally neglected. Hence have arisen suspicions, reproaches, parties, separations, and confusion. The unruly have not been duly warned, the wandering and unsteady exhorted, nor the feeble and disconsolate strengthened and comforted.

There has been no union of spiritual interests. The chief bands of our societies have been family connections, the promotion of trade, large finances, or some other worldly ties.—Not the love of truth, not a mutual affection terminating in the scripture hope of Christ's second coming without sin unto salvation.

Give me leave also to mention the irregular attendance of church-members. Is it not a notorious fact, that numbers in London are never seen with the church, but one afternoon in the month, to partake of the Lord's supper? The other sundays in the month are devoted perhaps promiscuously to a M—d—n, a R—m—n, a W—f—d, or else to a country excursion, or some other entertainment, which business would not admit on any other day of the week. How-
ever

ever it cannot be known to the society, what the spirit, temper and character of the person are. There can be little harmony and love in peoples eating a bit of bread and drinking a sup of wine together, if they are ignorant of each others views and intentions in doing it. I'll not dwell upon the characters of your half-day hearers, your orator-admirers, and heretic-hunters. I'll trouble you no more with these things, your own acquaintance with the congregational churches in London, will afford you more instances than I have touched upon.

I'll only observe, that a society of men, although separating from a national church, governed by the rich and politic, principally supported by the generous donations of the deceased, tied together by family connexions, adorned with their best clothes, and meeting once a week to hear a man whom they respect, is no more calculated to hold up the purity of Christ's doctrines and precepts to the world, than any corporation-club in the kingdom. 'Tis a very faction, a mere worldly society, and there are no

traces of a Christian church in the form and policy of it. Who can ever think they are desirous of forming themselves according to the New Testament?

Fifthly,

The absurd method of education, that has prevailed in our academies, appears to me to be another cause of our present declension.

As if divine principles could not be sufficiently learnt from revelation, the system of some dull metaphysical divine, must first be introduced, and made forsooth the text. I dont say the standard, though some think it. There is no ridicule can be too strong, or satire too keen upon this practice. What, is not revelation clear enough, now the canon of scripture is compleated, to make the man of God perfect? Has God inspired any professor of the former or present age, to write a clearer revelation, than that in the New Testament? Or has he authorized any one to write an appendix to it? Is it not as absurd to introduce pupils first to a human system,

system, that they may understand the will of God, as it would be, to tell a person that wanted to know what kind of water ran from such a spring, that he must go miles down the rivulet, and taste it as it runs through some dirty channel?

What is all that the most accomplished tutors can dictate, to constitute divines, in comparison with the teaching of the Holy Ghost by his own revelation? Let pupils be made well acquainted with the languages, antiquities, geography, customs and history of the nations and times where the inspired men wrote——let them be well read in the sacred volume itself——and let them know the particular and grand design of each writer from their own perusal of them——and then you may trust them without fear, to what commentators and polemical writers have said. But till then, 'twill be ridiculous to perplex and muddle them, with any human systems whatsoever.

The man that understands and breathes the spirit of the New Testament, must be a good Christian and an excellent divine.

There

There is nothing else necessary to qualify him for public usefulness, if he has but a tolerable share of natural abilities, but the blessing of God. His being well versed in systems, creeds, fathers, will never qualify him without this. With these he may be well acquainted, and yet either greatly or totally ignorant of the spirit of our Lord's sayings, and the apostolic writings.

Another extreme on the other hand, is the dwelling too long upon ethics, and the external evidences for christianity. These I am sensible are both highly important. But after years reading upon these subjects, I am of opinion, men have been unnecessarily prolix upon them, in the instruction of youth. I deny not the expediency and necessity of the historical and external evidences for christianity, and I value much the indefatigable labours of the great Lardner upon this subject; but it appears to me, that the marks of divinity impressed on the contents of God's own revelation, as upon all his other works, are more striking, convincing, full and compleat, than what arises from

from external evidence.—As to most systems of ethics, it would be easy to shew, that they contain opinions quite repugnant to the character of God given in the scriptures, and the very being of vice and virtue, as they are there described. But this is not now my province.

As to both these methods of education, the result of them is this. The pupils of the former, if they follow their tutors, which genius and integrity, I own, will seldom suffer them to do, come out system-shackled, pert, scholastic, dogmatical, very much unacquainted with the scriptures, ignorantly orthodox, mere zealots for a party, the butt of deists, and the scorn of new-schemers.

The pupils of the latter, are continually clamouring about virtue, liberty, and the eternal nature of things. So that one would think at first there was no right thinking, nor true liberty, nor genuine virtue, but with them. And for these young gentlemen's charity, one cannot but be in love with it. How does it hang upon their melodious tongues ! 'Tis the emphatical word almost

most in every sentence. What shall I call it? 'Tis a goddess, or 'tis the summum bonum, or 'tis the very quintessence of heaven upon earth. Their charity, in short, is so good-natured a lady, that she neither frets herself about any sentiments, nor despises any. There is but one character upon earth that is offensive to her, and that will put her in a passion. That is, the man who insists upon it, that revelation was intended to convey some ideas to the mind, which are important to the hope, holiness and happiness of sinful creatures. And as he is strenuous in professing these, and cannot think a man right that rejects them, though he allows him boundless liberty to think and act in his own way, yet madam charity, whenever she meets him, never fails to be in a violent passion with him.

These young gentlemen talk mightily too about freedom of inquiry. 'Tis important, 'tis the glorious privilege of Britons! True it is, and may it ever be so. But why is this so great and inestimable a privilege? Why 'tis answered, because of the discovery
of

of truth. A proper answer. But how can Mistress Truth, and that Lady Charity above-mentioned, be reconciled? Indeed, gentlemen; they are not fit companions—they'll never agree. And if you keep one company and worship her, you must, indeed you must, abandon the other. Truth is venerable, solemn and pointing to the conscience, as well as comforting and supporting to the mind. But the Charity before described, allows of no attention to be paid to it in this view.

I submit it to the consideration of every judicious Christian, whether any thing can be taught better for the support of poor guilty distressed souls, than what is repeatedly inculcated by the apostles in the Acts? And where can any one know more clearly, the import and full meaning of the principles *there* taught, concerning the person, offices, righteousness, and compleat redemption of the Son of God, than by reading his story in the Evangelists? And is it possible for any professor, to discover to us, by any new system, how christians should better live

E. christianity

christianity in private in every relation of life, and how they should profess and maintain it in their societies more conformably to the will of Christ, than by reading the apostolic epistles to the churches? Here, here, we may see, how Jesus and his apostles would have christianity observed. The German systematic, and the mere ethical divine, will certainly fall then vastly short of him, who fetches his materials from the forementioned divine writings.

The slavish practice of writing lectures, and after too, sometimes, mere novices in literature and divinity, is highly absurd, as books are so easy to be come at, now printing is come to such perfection. It has a tendency to deaden the spirits, and unnerve a pupil for application. And I have this to observe against it, that of all who have been thus brought up, that I am acquainted with, not one has ever made any good use of them after he has left the academy. But most have thought with indignant resentment on the time spent in them, and have looked upon it as totally lost.

If

If a divinity tutor be not a great philosopher, an eminent mathematician, a deep civilian, it may be dispensed with. But if he be not well acquainted with the languages in which the scriptures were first wrote, the customs, manners, and history of the times and nations where they were first published, a pretty ready ecclesiastical historian, and a man of good natural sense, he is by no means equal to his office. I am sensible these accomplishments are nothing, without the upright heart, the fair character, and the truly christian spirit in all its various parts. But I am as sensible, the latter without the former, will never answer the end of such a profession.

Finally,

I would mention the ignorance and enthusiasm that have prevailed in our assemblies.

I know very well our societies are not more so, than others, where there is a kind of zeal among them. But I do not address myself to them. Neither will I say this is the

state of our societies universally, but I will say 'tis too generally so. I am acquainted with many of them in town and country.

The Bible neglected.

'Tis as great a rarity almost, to find a common professor, so acquainted with the main scope and contents of the sacred books, as to evince to us he has his leading sentiments from thence, as the appearance of a comet. No, any thing must be read on a Lord's day evening but the Bible. This is not favoury enough. Every man and family too have their favourite authors, as the Quakers have their Robert Barclay, and a new sect their Glas and Sandiman. These favourites are thumbed over from beginning to end, whilst the poor Bible lies by as a sealed dry book and dead letter; and the greatest respect that has been shown to it, is to let it stand unperused upon the shelf to be fed on by spiders. Or if it be now and then looked into, 'tis only as we would look at a riddle; to see how some ingenious man has interpreted it.

From

From this impious neglect of the Bible, has arose a zealous attatchment to human phraſes, more than to the phraſeology and ſenſe of the ſacred volume.

This vice I am now ſpeaking of, has been countenanced by our never reading the New Teſtament and important parts of the Old, regularly in our public aſſemblies. A baſe omiſſion in perſons, that particularly profeſs to have their doctrines and rules of action from the New Teſtament. In the more private aſſemblings of the brethren, it has too generally been left out, and the vileſt cant about unmeaning feelings ſubſtituted in its ſtead. What, is the Bible the rule of faith and practice or is it not? Can he be a bad Chriſtian who knows and feels and lives agreeably to that? If ſo, the ſcripture is not our only rule. Does the Holy Ghoſt reveal any thing more, than is in his own word, to profeſſors now? Does faith ever come but by hearing or ſome means of information? Is there any ſuch thing, as what we may call a metaphyſical inſpiration in the preſent age, whereby ſentiments are immediately infused

infused into the mind without the use of the bodily senses? Nay, was there ever? 'Tis presumption, 'tis blasphemy to pretend to it.

Whims about faith.

Then again there have been such works made with poor faith, that one scarcely knows what to call it. One while 'tis the mouth, or hand, or wing, or feet of regeneration. Then again 'tis considered as a kind of ethereal infusion, which is denominated the principle. This infused principle is represented as producing acts upon acts, in a vast variety of divisions and subdivisions. —A poor man, who was distressed in his mind about his salvation, came not long since to me, and told me his complaints. I heard him with attention and concern. In my reply, I told him he had formed wrong notions of christianity, and stated to him some passages of the New Testament, which the apostles had delivered to men under the same kind of concern. He heard me, but seemed surprised at my counsel. I told him

I could give him no better advice than that, and if he understood and believed it, it would give him some kind of satisfaction and relief directly. Oh! says he, 'tis the scripture, and I believe all that. And dont you then, said I, find it glad tidings, truly gospel to you? No, says he, I am afraid I have not the faith that is saving. Pray then, replied I to him, what do you apprehend saving faith to be? Why, says he, I may compare it to a pipe for the reception of Christ, as that instrument does the water. Now, adds he, I dont find this within me. Then I answered, you expect to feel it, do you? Yes, Sir, said he. Why then, I added, if I could now make you understand and believe all that Jesus and his apostles said, you would not expect to be relieved by it, would you? No to be sure, says he, without faith in the heart, and the receiving Christ's person as well as his word.

I leave the reader to make his own remarks upon this. I could produce numbers of instances more of the same kind. 'Tis no question at all with me, that these gross
and

and dangerous notions of faith, came originally from the writings of those learned doctors, who have laboured with all their criticism and skill, to make an essential difference between believing the word and testimony of Jesus, and the believing in his person and offices. What, does not he that believes Christ's words, believe him? Does not he that abides in them, abide in the Father and the Son, or rather they in him? Then the scriptures speak not truth.

What was Christ's word or testimony about, but his person, offices and redemption?

Every body knows what it is *to believe*, considering its simple sense, as well as what it is *to think*. And any attempts to explain either, would be to confound them. And if persons do not know what it is to believe the gospel savingly, 'tis because they are ignorant of, or see not the evidence for, its glorious contents. I could refer you to numbers of ancient as well as modern authors, who consider faith in this same simple plain manner. But I'll only mention Mr. John Erskine's essays, and a late performance of
Mr.

Mr. Rotheram's, preacher at Oxford, and, if they are suspected of Sandimianism, I cannot help it. I am sure what they say about it, is scriptural, and sensible, and believe every unprejudiced person will think so *.

Silly notions of Regeneration.

I forbear to dwell long upon the gross notion of regeneration, that has been too commonly entertained. Though the most celebrated writers upon that subject, of orthodoxy and sense, have absolutely disavowed the communication of any new natural powers, yet it is too commonly thought, and too much countenanced by ministers, that it is something of a natural and impulsive change of the mental powers, by the almighty energy of the Holy Ghost, without the instrumentality of Gospel truth. Than which I think nothing can be more contrary to the scriptures. " Begotten again by the incor-

* I would not be understood to approve all Mr. Rotheram's opinions, though I admire him much. 'Tis not a Question with me, whether he hinges a man's acceptance with God, upon what he believes? 'Tis plain he does not.

ruptible seed of the word"——"by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead"——"of his own will begat he us through the word of truth." And the regeneration of the holy spirit preached up to Nicodemus, as is plain from the close of our Lord's discourse, was to be effected by the knowledge of him "as lifted up." The infallible consequence of this gross and unscriptural notion, is to lead some to despair, others to presume. Nothing in the gospel will ever be glad tidings to the former, whilst they conclude, that regeneration is a positive act of mere power upon the soul, which effects a change they must be sensible of, prior to any alteration of views in consequence of the influence of new sentiments. An apostle tells us, and I'll believe him, that he who believes (in the New Testament sense of this expression) that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.

Absurd notions of the spirit's influences.

Upon this subject there are many ridiculous opinions entertained. It is too generally concluded,

concluded, by common people, that these can be known by mere feeling, without the scriptures. But this is impossible. I own they are distinct from the word itself, but they never operate savingly without it. If they do, we may be, nay, are, saved, without the knowledge of Jesus. This, in my opinion, is the very soul of Quakerism, and of all manner of enthusiasm, even to the setting up experience above the scripture *.

The apostles, nor our Lord himself, ever attempt to explain the modus of the spirit's influences. They can no more be discerned than the operation of air or wind in vegetation. We know that earth and water of themselves, without air, will never vegetate. We also know, that the generality of plants, will not grow by mere air, without earth and water. But I wont say that the vivifying power of God, through the air, could not, if he pleased, cause vegetation. However we know it does not. 'Tis not

* See a sermon or two, published not many years since, intitled, "The Christian's experience the standard of truth."

his pleasure. 'Tis the same as to the spiritual birth and growth. We find not one of the first christians regenerated, converted, edified, even in the age of miracles, without the conviction and belief of gospel truth. 'Twas this that saved them. They had no other spiritual food. But at the same time we know, this never took effect, without the invisible blessing of God, For Paul might plant and Apollos water, but 'tis God must give the increase.

As then the wind never produces vegetation without earth or water, neither does the spirit regenerate and sanctify us, without the influence of his own revealed truths. —What God *can* do is one thing, what he *does* do is another. Here then we have a certain maxim or standard, to know whether we have the saving influences of the spirit or not. —The sacred scriptures. Let therefore our prayer daily be, in the language of our Lord, “ O God, sanctify us, through thy truth, thy word is truth.”

The having his belief and practice, formed upon the gospel, is the only infallible proof, that a person is under the saving influences

fluences of the holy spirit. No emotions, exaltations, depressions, or heart-workings whatsoever, can ever be the evidence of them, without they arise from scripture sentiments.

Impressions of texts of scripture.

Let me add, the sudden impressions of texts of scripture, without regarding their scope and connexion, the circumstances of the passage, and the characters of them to whom they were first addressed, is another source of the most extravagant flights of enthusiasm. So that 'tis not the divine sentiment in the scripture, that supports and animates, or the spirit that breathes through the truth, but the peculiar mode or way of its being suggested to the mind. Here, here, all the comfort is built. Very fortunately for these mistaken people, they seldom have any but comfortable passages, which their spirit suggests to them. I never met with one, who ever pretended, that what our Lord said of Judas, "It would be better for that man if he had never been born," was ever applied to him by the spirit. Nay, if a low-spirited

rited man should once have this or any other awful text occur to his mind, and conclude it came from the holy spirit ; by the maxim I am speaking against, there is no manner of relief for him, despair and misery are unavoidable.

Catechising of children.

We have a practice among us of catechising our children. I own they ought to be very carefully instructed in the principles of our holy religion. This was a duty with much solemnity enjoined upon the Jews, and it is plainly charged upon christians by the apostles. But were the Jews to teach their children any thing but the word of God ? or were christians ? Can any human expressions set forth christianity in a clearer light than the words of the Holy Ghost ? or, is the faith of young persons more likely to be placed in God or men, by learning first *his* words or *theirs* ? I leave this last question to be answered by those who have been taught catechisms in their youth, and who have not been instructed to learn and study whole paragraphs, e-
pistles

pistles and books, in their connection. I really believe it to be my duty to apply myself principally to the latter, with respect to my own children, and leave others to judge for themselves. My own experience tells me, that my parents would have been doing me more real service, by teaching me the epistle to the Romans throughout, and laying that system in the Holy Ghost's own words in my memory, than by loading it with human phrases, most of which were hatch'd in the schools.

Conduct and temper of ministers.

Permit me to conclude this long detail, with observing, that the cant and pride of some of our ministers, have principally contributed to this ignorance and enthusiasm.

The setting too high an authority upon their office, their presumptuously thinking themselves the ambassadors of Christ*, and

* If ambassadors are those, who receive their commission immediately from their prince, no preachers can pretend to this title, without presumption. If they only lay claim to it, because of their persuading sinners to be reconciled to God, every private christian has a right to it, upon the same footing.

their

their labouring to attach men more to their person and interest, than to the truth as it is in Jesus,—have been too notorious in many. Instead of endeavouring to bring men into subjection to the Lord Jesus alone, as speaking in the New Testament, they have strove to prevent their inquiring and examining, under the notion of avoiding controversy. In their churches they have been insolent, over-bearing, impatient of contradiction. In their conversation, dictatorial, gloomy, positive, nettled at their peoples prying into subjects and expressing their determination to think for themselves.

The faith laboured at by these favourable gentlemen, is a very odd one. 'Tis as mighty a work as Homer's hero's, "Up the high hill he heaved the huge round stone," and if once it be performed, the whole of religion afterwards, is as easy as the truckling of it down again. There must be much tugging, according to them, before a person can come to Christ, or get on his righteousness. For their hearers are not to be justified by a sentimental faith, no, but by a powerful push or exertion of their own.

The

The gospel, the glad tidings of peace to the guilty, let them be believed ever so fully, in all their glorious import, is only an historical speculative faith, and therefore can never give ease to the soul, nor any way influence it to happiness. For shame! for shame! gentlemen, talk no more in this stupid senseless way. Leave Owen and Hufley, and Watts, and Ridgley, and Doddridge, and others, to their own scholastic distinctions, and follow you the phraseology of the New Testament. Though I cannot think with Palæmon they were a set of wilful corrupters of the gospel, I am far from thinking them infallible any more than I do him. They never pretended to infallibility. Luther was for persecution unto banishment, Calvin for persecution unto death; in this I think them both greatly mistaken, but I dare not damn their persons though I do their principle. I know of no sentiment so diametrically opposite to the genius and spirit of christianity, that the forementioned worthy gentlemen held, and therefore I shall not unchristian them, any more than approve their errors. I leave them to

their scholastic distinctions, wherein I think they perplex and obscure the faith, and endeavour to follow the phraseology of the New Testament. Let you and me then never revere these, or any worthy characters, further than they breathe the spirit of the pure gospel. They neither of them, were they living, would desire us to follow them further.

It has been too common amongst us to make this the grand end of preaching, either to systemize the congregation, and clothe them with the rusty armour of scholastic divinity, that they may be the furious champions of a party, or else, to produce some strong sensations, and impetuous affections, by warm excitements to seriousness and devotion. The preaching up scripture principles, I would not be understood to object to, and I own, the man who does this, must have a system and a strict one too; but let them appear as much as possible in their native dress, without any of the fopperies and encumbering trinkets of Thomas Aquinas and Dun Scotus. Seriousness and devotion proceeding from right views,

views, I by no means would treat lightly, as I am persuaded there can be no true christian without them. For, as Rochester said, if christianity be true, 'tis the most serious, solemn, thing imaginable. But what I object to, is all manner of devotion, that is not generated and nourished by the pure sentiments of the New Testament. For this must be very dangerous. What was Paul's before his conversion, that led him to persecute beyond measure the church of God? What was Laud's? What was his brethren's the Pharisees in our Lord's time? Did not often many of the devout join, in the most violent opposition against the apostles and their gospel? In short we may justly say of zeal and devotion, as we often do of fire and water, they are very good servants, but exceeding bad masters.

It is not enough then, that preachers deliver sentiments scholastically but scripturally and plainly, so that their hearers may see for themselves they are taken from the inspired book. Nor is it enough for them to excite a spirit of zeal and devotion in their assemblies, but they ought to see to it,

that it be evangelic, the pure effects of scripture principles. I am fully convinced by much observation, that true, lasting, progressive, heart piety and unaffected goodness, only keep pace in societies and individuals with scripture knowledge.

Thus have I briefly stated what I think to be the causes of that declension and unsteadiness that subsists among us. I do not think they are peculiar to our denomination of Dissenters, or that Dissenters are more subject to the chief of these follies, than devout Churchmen. Neither do I affix them to any particular society or individual, because I write not to inflame, but to reform. I have nothing to lose by this publication, unless it be the expence of the press, nor do I write for gain. There is no man that I fear to offend by speaking my sentiments, or any one that I expect to receive a reward from. I fear the terror of no man's censure, nor the tribunal of any board of ministers whatsoever. There is only one I am anxious to please, and that
is,

is, the judge of the heart. To him I appeal.

'Tis my happiness now to address societies and ministers, who need not to wait—for an act of parliament—the determination of a convocation—the order of an archbishop or the resolution of a presbytery,—before they attempt a reformation. No—'tis your privilege and your dignity to be independent. Your right of examining, altering and reforming, is in yourselves. And of your ministers it may be said, as was once said of a king of England, they have all the power that can be desired to do good, but none, without the consent of the people, to do harm. I might also add, your professed plan of discipline if followed, would really free you as much from priestcraft, as the Quakers can boast, with the superior advantage of a learned as well as godly ministry.

And here allow me to propose to your consideration the following brief directions, you are to judge of their propriety and importance.

In

In your religious concerns, pursue no other interest than that of the truth and righteousness of the New Testament.

That you may know what they are, read it privately and publicly.

Frequently meet—frequently pray—and frequently converse together about the kingdom of God.

Warn the unruly, comfort the feeble minded, love one-another cordially as brethren, and reject the unbelieving and immoral, whether poor or rich.

Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory.

Beware of a Diotrephes.

Place not the strength and glory of your interest in your numbers or riches, but in your faith and purity.

Be not afraid to give up old phrases, customs and practices, if they are unscriptural, or to reject new ones if they are without the sacred sanction.

Avoid—carefully avoid, the traditions of the elders.

Believe no man, and be influenced by no man, in your religion, however serious, devout,

vout, and learned, without a Thus faith the Lord.

Take care of false experience and devotion, and try the spirits whether they be of God by the only infallible test.

Seek not so much to condemn other parties and characters, as to know, believe, and do, the will of God yourselves.

Let ministers renounce the hidden things of dishonesty——not walk in craftiness——never handle the word of God deceitfully, and only commend themselves to every man's conscience, by a manifestation of the truth, in their conversation, preaching, and lives.

Let the people revere them highly for their work's sake, readily deal out unto them of their temporals for their easy and comfortable support, but never intrust their consciences or too much influence and power with them. They are but fallible men. They deserve respect no further than they profess and live the truth. And doing this, they can never be too much valued.

Be very solicitous to provide for the poor, yet take care of admitting any, who come only for the loaves and fishes.

Lay not a stress upon any thing not found in revelation, and treat nothing as trifling that is found there.

Expect no new revelation, and treat that you have, as an appeal to that principle of intelligence God has given you.

Finally—In all things let every man act as in the sight of an omniscient God.

Such a scriptural reformation as I propose, will I know meet with many obstacles.

In most of our congregations there are men, who are grown callous in school divinity and mystic devotion. For them to give up their gods, would be almost a miracle; my insisting so much upon scripture-knowledge will not suit these. And I expect my letter will have no other influence on them, than to excite their pious clamour and devout censures. Let them rave on.

More powerful enemies still will be your system-shackled tutors and leading men, whose influence and authority among the religious, principally depend, upon the perplexing,

plexing, muddling, mystical way of stating faith, regeneration, and the spirit's influences. Their indignation will be fired. And most likely it will burst forth in loud explosions of anathema. Or if not, artful insinuations shall be given out, that the writer of this letter is no friend to the congregational churches, but a sower of sedition amongst them. But judge thou, reader, between us, and believe neither of us without evidence. I have no dominion over thy conscience, nor ought they. Hear Christ and his apostles, and if we speak not, and act not, according to them, treat us as deceivers.

Your methodistical folks will object to this reformation in our societies, because it will prevent their rambling, and throw cold water upon the fire of their enthusiasm. Tell them, if they'll not submit to the order and discipline of God's house, the religion they have embraced, is not that in the New Testament. This consists more in progressive knowledge and goodness, than in temporary raptures and feelings.

The last and most formidable opposers of any attempts for reformation amongst our-

selves, will, I presume, be the Glassites, But here let it be observed concerning them, that I should be glad to see something of the same zeal for religion, and affection for one-another in our assemblies, as is visible amongst them. And I say of them, to you, in the language of Gamaliel, refrain from reproaching and malignantly opposing these people, and leave them to worship their God in their own way; for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it. Let us reason with them out of the scriptures, but never persecute them with our tongues or in any other way. Let 'em condemn us and welcome; surely their solemn censures cannot shut us out of heaven, if we are found in the faith and practice of the gospel.

The principal aim of these people in their conversation with others, seems to terminate in this, that unless you join them, you cannot profess and live christianity in its purity. I appeal to any, that have been conversant with them, for the truth of this. Now might I not ask, where Mr. Glass, when

when he was turned out of the Kirk, about forty years ago, and his adherents, had the authority to form themselves according to what they thought the plan of the New Testament? Did their elders receive their commission from any others, who had it in a lineal succession from the apostles? absurd! ridiculous in the highest degree to suppose it. Why then should it not be as possible and practicable, by the blessing of God, for any society of professors, to reform and govern themselves according to the light of the New Testament now, as it was at first for them? Presbyterian and congregational doctors and pastors, have supposed, they have a right of inducting ministers into the office of bishops or elders, but where they derived it from, I am at a loss to know. Not from the scriptures I'm sure, for there is not one instance as I can recollect, of an ordinary pastor or bishop, ordaining another, in a church to which he did not belong. And I think the Sandimanian elders have no more authority in this matter than they have.

Their admission of no measure of forbearance, I think is absolutely repugnant to the doctrine and practice of the apostles. For they exhorted christians to receive one-another in love, when they differed about meats and days. They never insisted upon unanimity in these matters, and yet both could not be equally right. Paul knew and was persuaded by the Lord Jesus Christ, that nothing was unclean of itself, yet he says; that to him that accounted a thing unclean, it was unclean, Rom. xiv. 14. 1 Tim. iv. 4. Matt. xv. 11. He was a Jew, and therefore must think his brethren wrong, in insisting upon a distinction of meats. Yet he was not for excommunicating them. To say he indulged the Jews, because their dispensation was wearing away, is to say, that he allowed of forbearance. Or to say, it was right for the Jews to observe days and meats, and not for the Gentiles, would be to say, that there was not the same rule of action for both. If therefore, when christianity was established in churches, near thirty years after our Lord's ascension, and, most likely, with greater

greater purity than it has been since—the apostles allowed of forbearance, and exhorted to mutual love and affection notwithstanding these differences,—why should there not be the same forbearance now, to some persons who in a few respects differ about eating of blood, baptism, &c? 'Tis answered, the apostolic decree is clear and explicit, and there must be no reasoning against it. But let me add, the apostolic exhortation is as clear and explicit for mutual forbearance, and there must be no reasoning then about this.

Was not the decree of the apostles, Acts xv. and repeated chap. xxi. occasioned by the disputes between the believing Jews and believing Gentiles at Antioch? Was not the intention of it to promote peace and harmony? It seemed good to the church, apostles, and the Holy Ghost, to injoin those things as included in the decree, as the only necessary matters to obtain that end. It could not be, that these were all the necessary things for the believing Gentiles to practice, fornication was before and afterwards prohibited, I acknowledge, but we find not
the

the abstaining from blood and things strangled, ever hinted at in any of the epistles. As to the apostle's decree being hinted at in the revelation twice, no man would ever suspect it, that was not reading to find passages for a particular purpose. Mr. Glas's authority here is not sufficient with me. If they can in their consciences, condemn a man as an unbeliever, who really looks upon this decree as temporary, notwithstanding they find him rejoicing in the saving truth, loving the brethren, and doing good to all men, I allow them their liberty, but abhor their presumptuous severity. O my soul! come not thou into their counsels.

In short the society, which allows of no variation of opinion, must necessarily prevent freedom of inquiry into the scriptures, and tempt the poor and ignorant to put an implicit confidence in their authority. A consequence so horrible to me, that I cannot join with any church that directly or indirectly countenances it.

“ An excommunicated person is to be received into the church but once more, because there is no instance of a third reception

tion of the same person ; and because it is impossible we should obtain a fuller evidence of his repentance, than that which he has given before." Human ! arbitrary ! unscriptural ! let these professed scripturalists look to Matt. xviii. 21, 22. and Luke xvii. 3, 4. and blush. Our Lord in the former passage, had been speaking of church-censures. In the last mentioned place, a brother might repent seven times and be forgiven. What, did our Lord encourage fix hypocritical repentances ? Does he intimate that either of them might be so ?——Should this be supposed to be a case that respects individuals, it is not less in point. For if an individual, is to forgive a penitent brother seven times, why not a church ?——If the maxim I am arguing against, be not an addition to the scriptures, and an appointment of men, then there is none in the Roman church.

“ An elder or bishop must not marry again.” Why ? “ because he must be the man of one woman.” “ It cannot mean his having one wife at a time, because this was prohibited a private member.”

Is it not a known fact, that polygamy was common among the Greeks?—That they often took more than one wife, and then for trifling reasons divorced them? or at least for such as were not allowed by revelation.

Now it is plain to me, the meaning of it is, that he should be the husband of one wife at the same time, having no other that he had divorced, which a private member might have, having taken them before his conversion. So also, she that was called to the office of a widow, was to be one, who had not lived (having been divorced) with two husbands, whilst they were both living.

But not to insist on this, why should we suppose, that in the character of a bishop, his being the husband of one wife, should be more peculiar to him, than the rest of his qualifications? Was a private member allowed to be a wine-bibber, covetous, greedy of filthy lucre, any more than a bishop? Was he not to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, or to have them in subjection, as well as an elder?

There

There is nothing in scripture or reason, that can oppose, universally, second marriages in bishops or deacons. 'Tis a mere whim, taken first of all, from a false construction of one of those spurious, though ancient canons, called that of the apostles.

It is very probable from 1 Cor. vii. 7, 8. that the apostle was a widower. The *αγαμοι* there, were undoubtedly widowers, as the word is often used by other authors. And the apostle, not the Lord, advises them to continue even as he was. When he addresses the *παρθενοι*, male and female virgins, he reckons not himself with them, ver. 25. Yet the apostle in chap. ix. 5. asserts his right of marrying, and of having a support from the churches, as the brethren of the Lord and Cephas had. He never supposes it would have been contrary to his apostolic character.

Where is scriptural authority for the necessity of two elders, in every act of church discipline, and the administration of the Lord's supper?

Do these gentlemen read the book of Canticles, the tenth of Nehemiah, the 24th,

25th, 26th, 27th, and beginning of the 28th chapters of the book of Exodus, in their public assemblies? Do they understand them all themselves, much less the common people?

How a truly faithful, holy, Anabaptist, many of whom I know and believe to be such, though not of their opinion, must necessarily disbelieve and deny the sovereignty of divine grace, I have not eyes to see, nor a capacity to understand. What, do they damn all that die in infancy? I never heard they did. Or do the Glaslites say, that all whom they baptize in infancy, will infallibly be saved? Let them show me, if they do, their authority.

But a bold assertion, and a positive determination, confirmed by a solemn censure, is one of the best weapons these gentlemen use, about church matters. It has great influence with the vulgar.

The summ of all is this, the allowing of difference of opinion in these matters, is contrary to the unity exhorted to: this is the grand argument, which supports the whole fabric of their discipline. To which

I answer. The allowing of any imperfections whatsoever in the brethren I commune with, is wrong, because 'tis contrary to the exhortation, be ye holy, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is holy. So that if a man tells me he has the least variation of heart at any time from God, I must condemn him. For the precept is, be thou perfect or holy, even as thy Father, who is in heaven is perfect.—But let me tell the Glassites, if the poorest person in the faith, of my acquaintance, should need it and require it, I'll wash his feet, in obedience to the command and example of Jesus. And further, if it appeared to me by any unquestionable examples, that it was a church ordinance, I would readily submit to it, as I do to the Lord's supper.

Nay, I will add, if there were any miraculous sicknesses, as there were undoubtedly in the apostolic age * now in churches, I would call the elders of the church, as James directs, join with them in anointing the person with oyl, and doubt not but the prayer of faith would save his life. But in common sick-

* Cor. xi. 30.

nesses, I have no ground for any such faith, if I had, I should be for keeping any of my religious friends from the grave, whenever they were ill.

If the apostle was now to have written to a number of American savages in the faith, I cannot say that he would have recommended it to them, to have lighted the pipe of love, as this is the highest token of intimate friendship amongst them. But I really question, whether he would have made the holy kiss an absolute term of communion in a British church, where 'tis counted in general, rather indecent, for men to kiss men.

Let then the nostrums and innovations of this new sect, my brethren, neither perplex nor alarm you. What you see in them right, follow, their inventions and additions, reject. There is no necessity for you to condemn Wickliff, Hufs, Luther, Calvin, the Bohemian brethren and Waldenses, which, I cannot see, how you can avoid doing, if you join them, and think them right. None of them were so severely un-
forbearing,

forbearing, as the Glassites are. There was indeed an inconsiderable body of Menonites in Germany, who set off upon the unbearing scheme the Glassites are upon, but their reign was but short—very short. I pretend not to predict their fate.

Upon the whole, if there be any thing in this letter just, listen to it. Wherein you think I am wrong, receive it not. And may the God of truth and peace, stir up you and me, to do what we can, by our profession, faith and practice, to recommend and inforce, the pure religion of the New Testament. Amen.

This was my intention in writing this letter, and shall be my daily prayer.

I am yours most faithfully,

May 10th,
1766.

AN INDEPENDENT.

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REMARKS

UPON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF THE

DISSENTING INTEREST,

WITH

Hints for its Improvement

BY MEANS OF

A CONSOLIDATED UNION.

*By Walter Wilson, Esq.
Author of History of Dissenting Churches.*

BY ONE OF THE LAITY.

LONDON:

HOLDSWORTH AND BALL,

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1831.

REMARKS,

&c. &c.

THE subject proposed for consideration in the following pages having been already brought forward in a periodical work,* there can be no impropriety in calling the attention of the public to it in the more extended form of a pamphlet. It is not from a desire to court publicity, nor from any importance that can be attached to the sentiments of a private individual, that the writer embarks in the discussion; but there is a homage due to the cause with which it stands connected, and it is only in obedience to this superior call, that he can hope to solicit attention.

It must be apparent to every one who is acquainted with the history and principles of nonconformity, that the features of dissent, as exhibited in the present day, wear a very different appearance to those which they presented formerly. Whether the number of persons who take the benefit of the act of toleration be now larger than it was at the time when the act passed, is immaterial to the present inquiry, which has a reference to quality rather than to quantity. In respect to the last, however, it must be obvious to every judicious observer, that not one half of such persons can have any legitimate claim to the title of Nonconformist; at least, as that term was understood by our ancestors. Whatever, therefore, may be the state of the case with regard to numbers, should these even be more decisive than I am disposed to admit, they would furnish alone but a very doubtful measure of prosperity. We must look, then, for something more unequivocal to guide our judgment; and if this is not to be found in the claims to character, I am at a loss where to search for it.

* The Congregational Magazine.

The disorganized state of the various religious bodies, comprehended under the generic term Dissenter, may be traced to the evil nature of the times that fell to the lot of the early Nonconformists. By the arbitrary conduct of the civil power, even their public worship was interdicted; to provide, therefore, for its perpetuity, by any arrangements that would impart to it a solidity of character, was quite beyond their reach. Could they have realized their own wishes, there can be no doubt that they would have organized their churches, as near as possible, to the models furnished by the Protestants of France, Holland, and Scotland. Being compelled, however, by the force of circumstances, to split into separate independent bodies, they retained a name without the substance; and, in the absence of the last, it is not surprising that the lapse of a generation or two should have extinguished all predisposition for the first. To this, other circumstances also contributed. The decline of spiritual religion in some congregations called Presbyterian, produced a confusion of ideas in vulgar minds, not trained to the habit of close thinking, and, therefore, incapable of making nice distinctions. Added to this, was the extensive movement in society, occasioned by the rise of Methodism, which gave a new tone to the feelings, and occasioned the religion of excitement to be substituted very much for that of form and substance.

The numerous societies that now sprang up, under the guidance of illiterate men, without any distinct views upon church-government, and associated chiefly for the purpose of communicating their religious feelings, merged gradually into the mass of Dissenters, although they were no otherwise such, than as taking refuge under the Act of Toleration. The popularity of this mode of dealing with religion, which made large strides upon the imaginations of the vulgar, gave a stimulus to the more regular Dissenters, who imbibed the phraseology and manners of their new allies, and, with them, an increased zeal and activity. A new character was now imparted to the face of nonconformity. The mystical form that religion had assumed, rendered it a matter of easy conveyance; so that the most illiterate persons who were initiated in the language of the new societies, possessed all the

requisite qualifications to render them eligible for teachers. Human learning being considered no better than a mark of the beast, was discarded as so much lumber in the way of spiritual growth; the application of criticism grew into disuse; and the interpretation of Scripture became the sport of the imagination, rather than the exercise of the understanding.

By a perversity of human nature, it often happens that matters the most abstruse and unintelligible, which confound the speculations of the wise and prudent, as being beyond the range of their perceptions, present no difficulties to the grasp of inferior intellects. This may be owing partly to an appetite for the marvellous, so common to the young and the uninformed; and partly to the incapacity of ignorance to embrace more than a single idea upon a subject. But, from whatever cause it may have arisen, the case was precisely so in this instance. The minds of men being inflated with a taste for what they termed technically "the deep things of God," these assumed, in the hands of the ignorant and credulous, a variety of forms, that baffled the exercise of any other than an implicit faith. Hence, the natural appearances that may be traced to the physical constitution of our nature, when cast in the crucible of their heated fancy, were transmuted into symptoms of a divine *afflatus*, and received as so many tokens of a correspondence with the invisible world. This communication with spiritual intelligences produced convulsions and revelations symptomatic of the new birth, terminating in an assurance of faith, and transporting the recipient, in imagination, into the adopted family of God. With such high-born pretensions, the initiated became adepts in all the mysteries of faith, which, with the help of allegory, so alluring to the ignorant, they familiarized to the capacities of their hearers. Vested, in their own ideas, with the authority of privy-counsellors to the Most High, they affected a knowledge of his secret purposes, with regard both to themselves and others; and, wresting from the Roman pontiff his exclusive patent for infallibility, they transferred to their own keeping, the portals of the kingdom of heaven. With such inferior matters as the forms of church-government they did not meddle, but resolved themselves into

independent sovereignties, as most compatible with their spiritual theocracy.

Under a regimen so flattering to the pride of human nature, the quiet and sober religion of the Nonconformists began to disappear apace. It is true, that too many congregations had settled down into a formality and indifference, that required a stimulus to arouse them from their lethargy ; but the proneness of mankind to advance from one extreme to another, was never more glaringly exemplified than in this instance. From the frigid exemplification of moral virtues, which all men assent to, but copy with feebleness when the affections are not interested by evangelical motives, the new preachers gave in to all the excesses of a wild enthusiasm, for which they had the applause of the vulgar. The chasms occasioned by the dissolution of old churches, were filled up by others infected with this leaven, which also insinuated itself into those that survived, until a spurious piety overspread the whole mass ; leaving the name of dissent a by-word and a reproach to religion.

I speak here only of the effect in general. That there were many who escaped the contagion, and reflected honour upon the cause of nonconformity, by their adherence to the sober religion of their forefathers, is not to be doubted ; but they were lost in the crowd, and stigmatised by their weaker brethren as formalists. Some of the follies formerly associated with religion have been, indeed, long since discarded, and replaced by more wholesome instruction, yet much of the leaven still remains ; and until it be separated from the mass, the more sober-minded Dissenters will be held responsible by the world for the reveries of the many.

Although the forms of religion are only the *media* through which spiritual nourishment is communicated to the soul ; yet, when these are neglected, or treated with a cool indifference, there is reason to believe that principles and duties will be equally disregarded. Method and arrangement are as conducive to the growth of knowledge and piety, as they are essential to prosperity in matters of a civil nature. If their tendency be to generate formality, yet even this is preferable to volatility and confusion. But the spirit of religion may co-exist with an attention to its forms, and is most likely to

be kept alive in a healthy state, when subjected to an orderly process. If our first duty be to seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness belonging thereunto, our next brings us to the visible means, and obtrudes an inquiry into the *rationale* of christian worship.

The facility afforded to the propagation of religion by the Act of Toleration has raised up shoals of adventurers, who have embarked in the spiritual warfare upon their own account, but often with carnal weapons, and laden with mischief in every shape that human folly can devise. Independent of each other, and irresponsible to any tribunal but that of their deluded followers, collected from the scum of society, and easy dupes to whatever may alarm their fears, or gratify their pride, they find refuge in the generic name of Dissenter. The holy cause, now desecrated by folly in so many disguises, was once supported after a different manner. It was not to be the patrons of such disorder, that the Bateses, the Baxters, and the Henrys, seceded from the Establishment. Those enlightened and holy men, whom we take for our exemplars, and delight to honour, were they now to land upon our shores, would find themselves in a strange country, and feel but little sympathy for a cause that has so strangely deteriorated. To attempt its purification amidst the discordant elements of which it is composed, seems almost a hopeless undertaking; yet there may be no room for despair, if the wiser and more judicious part of the body would apply seriously to its renovation.

There is now a prevalent idea in different parts of the country, that something ought to be done, and will be undertaken forthwith, to give greater consistency at least to the loose materials that compose the most considerable section of the dissenting body. Whether the projected union is to be instrumental in promoting a reformation of discipline, or to embrace any objects of a purely dissenting character, does not appear from the printed paper of the provisional committee. A cursory glance at this document is sufficient to force the conviction, that any further proceedings upon it will be a *nothing-doing* business,—as futile in its purposes, as these are irrelevant to the real wants of the case.

The matters propounded in this paper as objects of the

union, are these:—The extension of Christ's kingdom,—a more ardent and mutual affection amongst Independents,—more earnest prayer for the whole body,—the formation of new associations,—the defence of our civil rights,—a plan for collecting funds for the erection of new chapels,—and a correspondence with other churches of the same faith. Now, these objects, however desirable in themselves, have but little reference to the improvement or consolidation of the dissenting body, and therefore can possess but little interest with its members, beyond what is common to christians of other sects. Besides, these matters are all provided for by existing arrangements, and may be carried to any further extent by means of the sympathetic feeling now in operation. An union founded upon such insufficient motives, would, I conceive, be as useless, as I fear it is hopeless. I am old enough to remember an attempt of the like kind several years ago, by some of the parties to this; and, also, to have witnessed its failure.

The leading features of the paper sent out by the committee, and so much in harmony with the anomalous character of the religious world, savour more of the resolutions of a society of Propagandists, than of any distinct objects that concern us as Dissenters. For the propagation of religion, both at home and abroad, we have numerous societies, whose concerns have arisen to a magnitude worthy of their object, and unprecedented in the history of the church. In this field of labour, different sects have exerted themselves in a manner highly creditable to their zeal, and productive of extensive benefit to the common cause of Christianity. In the prosecution of this work, let them go on and prosper; and, however diverse the modes by which it may be effected, I have no intention to interfere with their respective arrangements. But missionary undertakings, however good and laudable, have nothing to do with a coalition of Dissenters. This, to be at all useful, should embrace objects peculiarly their own; calculated to improve their condition, and to advance the cause of nonconformity as the purest mode of dispensing religion. Whatever they have in common with other sects, let them pursue with unanimity, and wherein they differ, let their distinctions be maintained in charity; for there is still

ample room to enlarge the confines of christian fellowship. But if nonconformity is ever to flourish again in this country, it must assume other features than it now possesses, and this can be hoped for only from the united exertions of those who feel an interest in its welfare.

From the complexion of what has transpired upon the subject it appears that the proposed union is intended to be confined to *congregational* churches. To this I have very serious objections, upon the score of utility as well as of practicability; and feel persuaded that, if persisted in, the whole scheme will fall to the ground.

It is well known, that one half of the congregations that come within the denomination of Independents, do not practise the congregational discipline, as expounded by Dr. Owen, and his coadjutors. Considering the fortuitous manner in which these societies arise, and the materials of which they are composed, it is not to be expected but that different customs will prevail amongst them, according to the exigencies of the case, or the taste of particular individuals. But, even if there were a greater uniformity in point of discipline, a slight view of the surface of society may, I think, satisfy us that the system does not work well. The experience of two centuries, in the course of which it has supplanted the Presbyterian discipline, has brought it to a sufficient test, and placed us in a position the most undesirable to a well-ordered mind. It is not by the mere act of raising up preachers, and swelling the list of congregations, which seem now to employ all our energies, that we can hope to gain the respectful attention of mankind, or exhibit nonconformity as the purest and most efficient mode of dispensing religion. Whilst we go on thus, attending more to the quantity of the material than to its quality, and neglecting the obvious rules of gospel-order, we may collect crowds from the unthinking multitude, but shall make little progress towards the stability of our cause, or in recommending it as superior to other systems. Notwithstanding the faults that are discernible in the Church of England, and the just exceptions that are taken by Dissenters to diocesan episcopacy, yet, the respectable part of the community will sooner submit to them than to mob-government.

It seems probable, from the spirit now stirring abroad, that the Church of England herself will, ere long, pass through the ordeal of reformation ; but as there is no reason to suppose that her episcopal constitution will be altered, the motives for dissent will remain as valid as ever. Dissenters, however, must not consider themselves exempted from those changes that are called for by the wants of society. If they are desirous of rendering their cause deserving of support, they also must submit to the process of improvement, and depend less upon their skill in battering down an erroneous system, than upon the means of supplying a more efficient one in its stead.

Many of the evils growing out of the congregational system, are felt and acknowledged by the most enlightened of its supporters, who cling to it nevertheless, as most agreeable, in their apprehension, to the primitive pattern. There have not been wanting writers to arrogate a divine right for a system that is at variance with human prudence. In every form of christianity, there is something, more or less, that may be defended from the Sacred Scriptures ; and it requires but an ordinary share of ingenuity to trace the likeness, so as to render it palpable to ordinary capacities. But he must be a bold man who supposes that all the ingredients in any one of these forms are so clearly traced as not to admit of any doubt ; for if this were the case, it might be justly asked, Whence comes so much diversity in the minds of honest men who have bent their inquiries to the subject ? That there are certain leading points that may serve as landmarks to guide us, cannot be doubted. At the same time, it is well known that some institutions, once deemed sacred, have undergone a change, whilst others have been disused altogether ; so that, if the machinery that was found necessary for the first propagation of Christianity were more perfectly known, it may be fairly presumed, that a change of time and circumstances would require some variations to effect the great purpose of utility.

I am no such friend to the doctrine of expediency as to allow it any weight against positive commands ; nor do I go the length of those writers, who have made it subservient to the support of institutions that sacrifice the interests of the

many to those of the few. Such a use of it is no better than pandering to the base passions of mankind. The questions of right and wrong, in reference to abstract truths, whether moral or political, are invariable in all countries and climates, and cannot change their nature, whatever modifications they may receive from the varied development of the human character. But if the essential properties of christianity are every where the same, the mode of its administration, in matters not expressly enjoined, must be the subject of convention, suggested by that expediency, of which we are all the victims in a greater or less degree, however unconscious we may be of the circumstance.

The evils resulting from Independency, as practised in the present day, may, I think, be unfolded in the following particulars, which I propose to illustrate severally by a few remarks.

1. The want of a principle of adhesiveness, to give consistency to the body, and a more efficient, as well as uniform character to its proceedings.
2. The insufficient character of its ministry.
3. The defective mode of education pursued in theological seminaries.
4. The unfavourable state of dissenting congregations.
5. The tendency to divisions in congregational churches.
6. The objectionable character of church-discipline.

1. Under the first head it may be observed, that the essential features of the system are of too democratical a character to admit of such an union as would give form and consistency to the whole. When there is no king in Israel, every one may do that which seemeth good in his own eyes. I am no advocate for an ecclesiastical monarchy; yet, it must be evident to every one, that society cannot exist without some form of government; neither can a number of societies embark in one common object without some link to bind them. The supreme power must reside somewhere, even in the freest institutions; for, without this concentration, disorder would become triumphant, and no business could be transacted. It is a common feeling, I believe, amongst persons of

education, that any government is better than that of a mob ; for, besides the hundred evils that follow in the train of this hydra-headed monster, it is often itself the victim of some aspiring person, who makes it the stepping-stone for his own private designs. If wealth be power, knowledge is perhaps more so, as it is often the instrument for breaking asunder the fetters imposed by the former ; and in the eye of reason it has the best title to government.

Amongst the Independents, every congregation is a little republic, too inconsiderable in itself to exercise much influence, but of too much imaginary importance to concede a particle of authority to any superior power. Yet, without a controlling influence, where would be the efficiency of an union ? With the exception of an annual meeting, that would be without business, and might make a noise for a time, things would go on just as they do now ; contempt would continue to be the lot of the Dissenters, and they would be left in the back-ground in society.

All men are fond of power, and will exercise it, more or less, within the circle of their influence, whether it be a single congregation, or a collection of such societies. To provide against its abuse, there must be checks somewhere, and they will be found the most efficient when power is divided, but flowing in an ascending scale through different gradations, until it arrives at some point where it becomes concentrated. Reason and experience combine to favour this process as the best security for civil liberty, and it applies no less to ecclesiastical institutions. But the genius of Independency is hostile to those connecting links which are essential to the preservation of order and good government ; although without them, it is impossible to govern large bodies of men with any uniformity of purpose. Separate interests, feeble energies, and discordant operations, are amongst the consequences inseparable from an ecclesiastical democracy, which becomes responsible for all the ignorance, vulgarity, and disorder that may be associated with the system. That there are many respectable men now entangled with it, who are alive to its evils, and would gladly correct them, I have no doubt ; but in order to this, they must adopt some efficient means to give identity to their cause, and rescue it from the hands of

intruders, who have so long enjoyed with them an undisturbed right of common. If Dissenters wish for instruction in this matter, they may go to the Moravians and Quakers ; to that useful body the Wesleyan Methodists ; but above all to their brethren of the Church of Scotland, with whom their forefathers most nearly assimilated ;—but to this point I shall advert more particularly hereafter.

2. One of the great causes of that disrepute into which the Dissenters have fallen, has arisen from the insufficient character of their ministry. Besides a host of adventurers, who are continually setting up for themselves wherever they can gain followers, many have been raised to the pulpit in their churches who never received any education beyond that of a common labourer or mechanic. Some of these persons may have possessed a good natural understanding which would have been useful to them in other employments, but their ministerial pretensions have rested solely upon their spiritual qualifications. These, it must be confessed, are sometimes of a questionable nature ; but, allowing their validity in some instances, they may furnish a good plea for church-membership, although not so for the office of a public instructor. A man may make an excellent tailor or shoemaker, who has no abilities for a statesman ; but if ambition or vanity take him out of his own station, he mars his proper calling, and makes himself ridiculous in that which he aspires to. *Ne sutor ultra crepidam* is an adage as applicable to the pulpit as to any other profession. Whatever may be a man's talents, it is an important branch of self-knowledge to discover their right direction, that each individual may abide with honour in his own calling.

The ease with which congregations may be collected amongst the labouring classes by persons in their own station of life, especially if gifted with a tolerable share of fluency and fervour, has given a reputation to the exertions of modern religionists beyond that to which they are fairly entitled. A profession of religion may now be had at a cheaper rate than in the days of our forefathers, and there is a like reduction in the value of the material. Hence the knowledge that puffeth up has taken the place of more solid attainments, and

induced a volatility of character better suited to the rambling spirit of the age. Considering the mixed motives that influence mankind, and the superficial taste that has been diffused over the religious world, it is not surprising if the assemblages that have grown out of it partake of a very heterogeneous character ; whilst artificial appearances serve as so many *stimuli* to engage the zeal of the propagandist. But there is such a thing as having a name to live whilst we are dead. In other words, men may make a noisy profession of religion, and say, " Come, see my zeal for the Lord," without any practical knowledge of themselves, or of the religion they profess. Novelty may for a time attract the attention, or it may be arrested by an appetite for the marvellous ; or the facts of the gospel may be addressed to the imagination like some pleasant tale, and the whole terminate in the religion of excitement. Whatever is delivered in such cases is received upon the credit of the preacher, who is often as ignorant as his hearers, and has need himself to be taught the first principles of the oracles of God. Religion, to be of any value, must gain an entrance to the understanding, and engage the best affections of the heart. We may talk fluently upon its doctrines, and value ourselves upon an unhallowed zealotry ; but if the root of bitterness be not extracted, we dwell not in the region of divine love, and are no better than sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. " The precious sons of Zion " are comparable to fine gold, purified of its dross, and bearing the impress of Him whose servants they are.

The free circulation now given to the Scriptures, has rendered them accessible to all who are capable of reading ; whilst the number of such is swelling daily by the laudable exertions of the schoolmaster. But, it will be acknowledged, that to read the Scriptures is one thing, and to understand them another. They may even be quoted freely in support of favourite theories, whilst the understanding remains ignorant of the mind of the spirit, and the heart untouched by his influences. To the mass of mankind the Scriptures are a sealed book, until some messenger be sent to open and explain them, as Philip to the Eunuch of old ; but the teacher must himself be taught before he can communicate the words of knowledge. It is not sufficient to say, that God can work by

feeble means, and by invisible agencies. His power no one doubts, nor that he sometimes employs human agents to accomplish his purposes. That He chooses the fittest, we may trust to His wisdom; although we are wholly ignorant of the secret springs by which he brings about his designs. But, so far as man's duty is concerned, we know that he has bestowed upon him understanding and affections—the one to learn his will, the other to impress it upon his heart; and it is only by the healthy exercise of both that we can be said to act like rational and accountable creatures.

In the choice of instruments to accomplish any work, we do not usually fix upon those who are inadequate to its performance. Now, if we employ so much discretion in our temporal affairs, how is it that we act with less prudence in those that are confessedly of higher importance? Is it that the work of the Lord may be done negligently; or, which is equally offensive, in a slovenly manner? Is the Bible a book of that easy and common-place nature as to need no acquirements for its interpretation? If so, how is it that so many wise and good men have differed, not only upon the correctness of our version, but upon many matters of more or less importance involved in its contents? True it is, that upon the essential points of human conduct, the word is so plain that he who runs may read; so that the wayfaring man, although unlettered, shall not err therein. Yet, the best informed persons have allowed, that the sacred writings, both of the Old and New Testaments, contain many things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable may wrest to their own destruction. It is one of the properties of ignorance to pronounce with confidence; and hence it is, that difficulties vanish so fast before many persons who can solve mysteries, and disentangle knots that, for many a long and weary hour, have exercised the faculties of the wise and prudent. “Our minds,” says Locke, “are not made as large as truth, nor suited to the whole extent of things; amongst those that come within its reach, it meets with a great many too big for its grasp, and there are not a few that it is fair to give up as unintelligible.”* Yet all is smooth and clear to these shallow pretenders, who, mounting

* Lord King's *Life of Locke*, I. 161.

upon the wings of their own fancy, make good the fable of Icarus, and lose themselves in the abyss of their own presumption.

I would here ask, is it nothing to Dissenters that they should cause their way to be evil spoken of; that they should furnish hostile weapons to their adversaries; and, above all, that they should expose religion itself to the mockery of the profane? If these should be thought hard sayings, let any candid and judicious man look around him and survey in silence the state of their churches, and the qualifications of their pastors. Surely, the Dissenters have a character to maintain in their collective as well as in their individual capacity. The world is not so prepossessed in their favour, neither are their opponents so few and powerless, that they can afford to sacrifice their reputation, or trust their affairs to the risk of a chance-medley. With the odds so fearfully against them, they cannot escape without scars and wounds, for which they have only to blame their own improvidence. The times are such, that they can go on no longer to trifle with impunity in a matter that so nearly concerns them. Their adversaries are subtle and numerous; ever vigilant of their conduct, and ready to avail themselves of their superior advantages in point of equipment. For this they are not to be blamed, so long as honour and conscience govern their proceedings; but if Dissenters are desirous of meeting them upon more equal terms, they must place their affairs upon a more respectable footing.

3. Objectionable as is the intrusion of illiterate persons into the ministerial office, *these* are, upon some accounts, preferable to *those* who receive but half an education in some of our academies. There is sometimes such an honest purpose and unaffected simplicity in the former, that we are tempted to overlook their deficiencies, in respect to a well-directed zeal for the best interests of our fellow-men. But who can endure the frothy declamations of a pulpit fop;—a young sciolist, who may have learnt to construe an ode in Horace, and to demonstrate a problem in Euclid, but has never taken the dimensions of himself! It is really quite sickening to hear a beardless youth dealing forth at one time his amorous

effusions from Solomon's song, under the mystical representation of the loves between Christ and his church; and diving at another time into all the depths of christian experience. As his knowledge of men and things cannot be supposed to be very profound, such minute details of the christian character must be gathered from the instructions of his tutor, or from the shelves of his library. In either case, the result is purely artificial, and at variance with that modesty and sobriety that should characterize the young teacher.

There is hardly any thing more revolting to a serious mind, than to see the pulpit profaned by affectation and pedantry. When the young preacher appears anxious for display, and exhibits his rhetorical rhapsodies in a succession of metaphors that set all good taste at defiance; when he tortures his voice and features with the convolutions that may be expected in a stage-player; and when he pronounces his decisions with an air of authority that belongs only to age and experience, we may be sure that his mind is taken up more with the thoughts of self, than of the solemn truths that he should deliver. Hence it comes to pass, that we have so much volatility amongst the professors of religion, and so little that is sterling either in the formation of the mind, or in the development of the character.

Time was, in the more quiet and sober days of nonconformity, when religion became so much a habit of life as to infuse itself into all its relations, both public and private; when it exercised the faculties of the mind, and gave a tone to the feelings, which responded to the impression it had produced upon the heart. The pastors of our churches were then to be found in their studies, inviting the aid of the morning sun or of the nightly lamp to assist them in their preparations for the pulpit, whilst, in their hours of relaxation, they were no strangers to the fire-sides of their people. As there must always be a means to an end, and the latter will bear some correspondence to the former, so it was in this case. An intimate knowledge of their pastor drew forth sentiments of respect; and, learning wisdom, and prudence from his lessons, they grew daily in an experimental acquaintance with the things that accompany salvation.

The main causes of the deterioration now so apparent,

may be traced partly to the improper selection of young men for students, and partly to their mismanagement at the academy. In the choice of students, other qualifications are too generally overlooked in favour of a reputation for piety. However desirable, and I may add, indispensable, the latter as the germ of future usefulness, yet such is the imperfection of man, and his liability to deceive and be deceived, that even here we may fall into error. It is one of the properties of youth to enter ardently upon a profession; but before the character is formed, it is impossible to anticipate the result. An effervescence of the imagination has been not infrequently mistaken for a divine *afflatus*, nor have we detected the fallacy until it has become visible in its effects. In forming a judgment upon the permanency of early impressions, we may succeed best, perhaps, by taking a measure of the mental *stamina*, and watching the process of nature in unfolding the elements of character. But the certainty of the living principle can only be ascertained by its moral effects. “*Whosoever hath been begotten of God, being renewed in his nature, doth not commit sin habitually, because God’s seed of the word abideth in him; and he cannot sin habitually, because he hath been begotten of God, and possesseth the natural qualities of his Father. By this sure mark, the children of God are discovered and the children of the devil: Whosoever doth not habitually perform good works is not begotten of God, neither he who loveth not his brother with a real affection.*”*

Having ascertained the moral fitness of the candidate, the next point seems to be an inquiry into his natural endowments. This is more particularly incumbent upon Dissenters, as the largest proportion of their students is supported by charity. He who is to appear in the prominent character of an instructor, should be free from natural defects; and not less from acquired habits that may obstruct his usefulness. Sour looks and downcast features savour more of grimace than of professional gravity. A cloudy countenance betokens grief, and sometimes more odious passions for which it may be mistaken; but when the mind is not oppressed by pain, there seems no good reason for offering violence to nature,

* Macknight, *in loco*.

and still less for conferring upon religion a repulsive character. Calmness and serenity, if not certain tokens of happiness, are amongst its fairest fruits ; and he who has no accuser in his conscience, has a good title to their enjoyment.

No youth should be trained to the ministry unless he has a capacity for learning, which may be easily ascertained by his tutor. Where there are marks of imbecility written in legible characters upon the countenance, the unfortunate youth should be turned over to some other profession. The Church of England can afford better to admit blockheads into an office which they can serve by deputy ; but Dissenters, who have no such privilege, should be solicitous to send out skilful workmen, competent to divide rightly the word of truth, giving to every one a portion in due season. If the student possess intellectual faculties of the first order, no pains nor expense should be spared in his education ; but as persons of this description are of rare occurrence, we must be satisfied with the ordinary run of talents. These should be cultivated upon a large and liberal scale, allowing full scope for the exertion of genius in every department of useful knowledge.

Dissenters have been justly blamed for confining their attention too exclusively to theology, which may be one reason for their banishment from polite society. The English universities have indeed split upon the opposite extreme ; and hence it is that so many of their graduates are but sorry theologians. When they do apply to this study, however, their other advantages confer upon them most generally a decided pre-eminence, and furnish them with a passport to consideration which is denied to their dissenting brethren. For the perpetuity of this distinction, there can be no valid reason. Literature is, or should be, the hand-maid of religion, opening wide fields of intellectual pasture, and a more extended sphere of usefulness. It is observed by Locke, that “the end of study is knowledge, and the end of knowledge, practice or communication ;” and he adds, “Heaven being our great business, the knowledge which may direct us thither, ought to take the first and chiefest place in our thoughts.”* He who takes not the proper means to lay up

* Lord King's Life of Locke, I. 171, 180.

treasures in his own mind, will make but an indifferent instructor of others ; nor will he gain the credit of sincerity for lessons that have cost him neither the labour of study, nor the faculty of reflection. Knowledge, whether human or divine, must be sought by rational means ; for whatever pretensions men may set up to supernatural teaching, if they overlook the ordinary methods of improvement, we may justly suspect their sanity.

There is one custom, common, I believe, to all dissenting academies, which, however it may be justified upon the plea of necessity, cannot be too strongly reprobated. The practice I allude to is that of sending out the students to preach in villages, and to supply vacant congregations, whilst under the progress of tuition. In some cases, this has occurred within six months after their entrance. The gross impropriety of such an usage must be apparent to every reflecting mind ; for its tendency is not only to confound and invert the order of their studies, but to remove that fence of modesty which should be held sacred until the proper period arrives for their introduction to the public. This ought in no case to happen before the close of their studies, when they shall have passed through the most rigid examination : a licence may then be granted to them by some competent authority, as probationary preachers amongst the Dissenters.

So long as our academies continue under their present regimen, we may produce shoals of preachers, but we shall look in vain for those solid recommendations that are to be expected in a divine. The young men, indeed, are less to blame than the system of which they are the victims. Supposing five years to be the term allotted at the academy, although it is often much shorter, yet even this is not too long to build up a moral and intellectual structure, even should there have been a previous foundation of classical learning. If the student be taught to compose sermons during the last year of his term, with the advantage of previous lectures upon systematic theology, aided by daily expositions and an occasional recurrence to practical writers, it is as early as propriety dictates ; and then they should be delivered only in the hearing of the tutor and the other pupils. But to divert him from his studies by a premature exhibition in the pulpit, is to unfix his mind, and to

engender habits that are any thing but favourable to success in his profession.

I am well aware of the reasons that will be urged in behalf of the practice here reprobated. The demands of the people, it will be said, are numerous, and the call for labourers pressing. Be it so. Let other means be resorted to for remedying the evil, or let the guilt of negligence lie at the door of those whom it more immediately concerns. But let us not suffer the opprobrium of doing evil that good may come; nor go on multiplying our debts without the visible means of discharging them honourably. It is true, that in many places the people are perishing for lack of knowledge, owing to the supineness or incapacity of their authorized teachers. If the Dissenters are able to go over and help them, every well-disposed person will wish them God-speed. But it concerns them to reflect, that they are not to allow one duty to put out another; nor to neglect the wise administration of their own affairs, in seeking for adventures in an enemy's quarters. .

4. The state of dissenting congregations throughout the country is generally such as to present a discouraging aspect. I do not speak so much with regard to numbers as to the materials of which they are composed; and a few exceptions may be admitted in favour of London and some other large towns. But generally speaking, it is a notorious fact, that our congregations exhibit a dearth of society, to well-educated persons, that has a strong tendency to drive them from their communion. Indeed, no other state of things can be reasonably expected, when even the minister himself is often a fit companion only for rustics. The people, being in his own rank of life, receive their tone from their instructor; and, insensible to the distinctions of society, they value themselves upon their spiritual degree, which becomes a substitute for decency and good manners. Under this levelling system, the worst passions are often concealed beneath the garb of religion. Concealed, indeed, they are only to themselves; for they sometimes break out with ungoverned fury, exhibiting a low-minded pride that would furnish an admirable picture of the mock-heroic.

The case of the more respectable part of our ministers is little less discouraging than that of the laity. When transplanted from the academy to some country congregation, they find themselves wholly at a loss for any society from whence they can reasonably hope for improvement. As young men, just entering upon the world, without the benefit of experience, and destitute of friends to whom they can look up for advice, it is much if they maintain their steadiness, and do not commit themselves by some act of imprudence that may injure their usefulness. Their education having raised them somewhat above the level of their hearers, they look to them in vain for the counsel they need; whilst the prejudice that is gone abroad against them, justified, in too many instances, by experience, shuts them out of general society. Should they marry prudently, or above their own rank in life, their partners find no suitable associates in the congregation, but are often the victims of low vulgarity, exciting nothing but mortification and disgust. When our ministers are studious men, much of the evil is mitigated by a taste for books; yet, even here they are liable to fall into errors, which society only can correct. It is judiciously observed by Locke, "Reading is but collecting the rough materials, amongst which a great deal must be laid aside as useless. Meditation is, as it were, choosing and fitting the materials, framing the timbers, squaring and laying the stones, and raising the building; but discourse with a friend is, as it were, surveying the structure, walking in the rooms, and observing the symmetry and agreement of the parts, taking notice of the solidity or defects of the works, and the best way to correct and find out what is amiss; besides that it helps often to discover truths, and fix them in our minds, as much as either of the other two."*

I shall be greatly misunderstood, if it should be thought that in the foregoing remarks, I design to pour any contempt upon humble piety. In the register of heaven, the souls of the poor may occupy as conspicuous a place as those of the rich, the redemption of the one being as precious as that of the other. Insensible to those adventitious distinctions, which give to one man a pre-eminence over another, the Supreme

* *Life of Locke*, I. 201-2.

Judge of all is no respecter of persons ; and, as in every nation, so in every possible condition of human existence, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted by him. If the gospel is preached most generally to the poor, it is because they are usually the most disposed to welcome it with a willing ear ; and if it comes home to them with power, producing the fruits of faith in a life of godliness and honesty, they will always claim and receive from the true follower of Christ, in whatever station he may be placed, that respect and esteem which their worth demands. Ignorance and poverty are no crimes, at least in the unfortunate subjects of them ; for, it is the business of society to correct the one and remove the other. It is the middle and upper classes, however, that give the tone to morals as well as to manners, by sweeping along with them all who come within the atmosphere of their influence ; and it is desirable that no unnecessary stumbling-blocks should be placed in their way, to inspire prejudice upon so solemn a subject as religion.

These observations apply equally to what has been advanced concerning the teachers of religion. For the mere purposes of conversion, it is not absolutely necessary that the preacher should possess the learning of a Paul, nor the eloquence of an Apollos. The unlettered rustic and the pious fisherman may each be an useful instrument in the class of persons to which he belongs ; but when he takes upon himself the office of a bishop, the public has a right to require of him his credentials, of which a material part will be sought in his qualifications. I have no wish to disparage the labours of pious and well-meaning men, who may imagine they have a call to go forth and preach the gospel ; although I suspect, if they knew themselves, the voice would say, “ Continue in the station for which nature and providence designed you.” It is not every pious enthusiast who is fit for a preacher ; yet we have shoals of such, who, because they are too lazy to follow their calling, or are unfitted for it by a mistaken zeal for religion, think themselves inspired to become the heralds of a cause, which they expose only to derision. This mode of propagating religion, whatever *eclat* it may receive from the multitude, can never serve the cause of the Dissenters.

Dr. Kippis justly observes, in reference to Dr. Doddridge, who formed his taste upon the great models of antiquity, in conjunction with the best writers of his own country, “It is desirable that the cause of truth, piety, and virtue, should come recommended with every possible advantage.”

It is an often repeated fact, that when men grow rich in the world, they desert the Dissenters ; or, at least, that this is commonly the case with their children after them. This may be set down to a defective education, to lukewarmness in religion, or to political causes ; and each may sometimes be answerable for the defection. But it may be worth while to inquire, whether the defects of the system pursued by the Dissenters, or rather, those arising from a want of system, have not furnished their quota to the evil, and engendered that indifference and disgust which have occasioned the loss of so many influential members. The customs of society, the snares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, may pervert the mind, and lead astray those who are not fortified by religious principle ; but when this is not the case, serious and thoughtful men will sometimes be found to desert a cause in favour of one that is speculatively or practically worse, because the evils they acknowledge do not press home so immediately upon their attention. Vulgar minds may impeach the motives that lead to such a change, from their incompetency to weigh and balance them ; but those who are acquainted with the workings of human nature, know full well that speculations upon the comparative merits of different forms of church-government, lose their influence when placed in competition with the charms of polished and intellectual society. If Dissenters would retrieve themselves from the low estimation into which they have fallen, they must remedy those defects which have driven men of influence from their congregations, and hedged up the way against the entrance of others, who would be ornaments to their cause.

5. A serious evil growing out of the democratical system of the present day, is the frequent *divisions* in congregations ; traceable either to the want of discretion in the preacher, or to the turbulent spirit of his hearers. He who has not the skill to govern his own affairs with prudence, is but

ill-qualified to superintend those of a whole congregation. Sometimes an unhallowed zeal for favourite doctrines which may be true or otherwise, but usually turn upon abstruse points that have little concern with serious and practical piety, is the occasion for kindling disputes, and giving vent to unholy passions. In such cases it generally happens, that the more ignorant the zealot, the more intemperate his zeal, and the more inveterate his prejudices; for he that is convinced already, stands in no need of further light, whilst he wonders at the blindness of mankind in resisting *his* convictions. When this virus is once communicated, there wants but little to spread the infection, until the whole mass becomes contaminated, and presents a hideous spectacle of spiritual corruption. How many congregations, once fair and flourishing, have been rent asunder, or wasted by a spurious orthodoxy! Were we to inquire whence this arises? I fear it must be referred chiefly to the character of their teachers, who have frittered away the substantial parts of religion, in accommodation to their own depraved appetites. It rarely happens that a truly learned man takes refuge in Antinomianism. This is commonly the resort of vulgar minds, contracted in intellect, and of slender acquirements,—a fact that speaks sufficiently loud to those who lament the evil, and are willing to stay its progress.*

The experience of many ministers who have been rendered uneasy by the jealousies of their people, will bear witness to the bad effects of that levelling system which has supplanted the unobtrusive piety and modest profession of our forefathers. For this they have partly to blame themselves, in giving encouragement to upstart preachers in their own congregations,

* The celebrated Robert Hall, speaking of this class of preachers, says very strikingly, "In their own estimation, its disciples are a privileged class, who dwell in a secluded region of unshaken security and lawless liberty, while the rest of the christian world are the vassals of legal bondage, toiling in darkness and in chains. Hence, whatever diversity of character they may display in other respects, a haughty and bitter disdain of every other class of professors is a universal feature. Of the force of legitimate argument they seem to have little or no perception, having contracted an inveterate and pernicious habit, of shutting their eyes against the plainest and most pointed declarations of the word of God. They seem to feel themselves as much released from the restraints of reason, as of moral obligation; and the intoxication of spiritual pride has incomparably more influence in forming their persuasion than the light of evidence."—*Preface to Chase's Antinomianism Unmasked.*

by the public exhibition of what is quaintly termed, their "gifts." From small beginnings, these persons acquire increased boldness, until they are encouraged to set up for themselves, and steal away the people from their own, or from other churches. The multiplication of societies by such means, can do no other than weaken particular interests, and degrade the Dissenters generally.

Another prolific source of discord in congregations, arises from the undue influence of some leading member, who aspires to the chief rule. Emerging, perhaps, from obscurity, and valuing himself upon his acquired wealth, he assumes a vulgar importance, as distressing oftentimes to his pastor, as it is injurious to the rest of his flock. Upon some sudden pique, he withdraws to a neighbouring congregation, or perhaps takes it into his head to build another meeting-house, and entice away a part of the people with him. As the procuring a pastor is not difficult in these times,—this is the next business; and there being always a sufficient number of ministers to sanction such irregularities, the interloper procures ordination, and both pastors are eventually starved. It is quite notorious, that without these divisions, the general income of dissenting ministers in country places is wholly inadequate to their maintenance, more especially if they have families dependant upon them. In many cases, indeed, they are as large as they would have any right to expect in the line of life which they have deserted; but the situation of others, whose education may have consumed a moderate fortune, is far from enviable.

Much of the disquietude prevailing in congregations, may be traced to the volatility of the age. When the pastor himself is infected with a rambling humour, he must expect to communicate the disease to his people. Whilst absent from his own charge, his place must be supplied by others; and the appetite that is fed with novelty will acquire a capricious taste, oftentimes to the loathing of wholesome food. Is it any wonder if disadvantageous contrasts are sometimes drawn in such cases to the prejudice of the stated minister; or that his people follow his own example of going abroad to see the world, and bring home with them habits unfavourable to steadiness? The modern practice of adventuring upon tours

of benevolence, has a strong tendency to unfix the minds of the people, and transfer their affections to strangers. However laudable the object, it should be secured by other means, and without the risks attendant upon unnecessary absence. It is of the first importance, that the pastor should have a strong hold upon the affections of his people; and that the latter should acquire a steadiness in their profession, attaching them to the spot where Providence has placed them. Local attachments of this nature create an interest in the preservation of the cause, which, with a right-minded people of regular habits, will never suffer upon the change of a minister. I have often thought that the divisions which so frequently follow upon that event, might be prevented, by the appointment of a second pastor in all large congregations, where the duty, if properly attended to, is too heavy for a single individual. Such an arrangement would have the further benefit of being a nursery for young ministers; who, trained under experienced guides, would be qualified for the pastoral charge of other congregations, or to take the place of their elders when they drop by death. In former days, when this usage prevailed, divisions were much less common than they have been since.

6. Although church-discipline is as much out of fashion amongst the Independents, as in other churches, yet most of them continue an usage that will be for ever a barrier against the admission of intelligent persons. I here allude to the custom of requiring a confession of faith, a subscription to a church-covenant, or a recital of spiritual appearances, commonly termed an "experience." For this heavy burden which they have laid upon men's shoulders, there is not the least warrant, either from scripture or common sense. As the great majority of persons who are called upon to subscribe to such declarations cannot be supposed to be at all versed in theological controversy, they can give only a blind assent to the faith of others, which becomes their own merely by appropriation. The operation of this tax upon the understandings of the intelligent, who have access to the same sources of information, and are as competent to make a right use of them as the compilers and imposers of such creeds, is to exclude them altogether from church-fellowship.

With regard to experiences, they afford a strong temptation to self-delusion, and are no better than a bounty upon hypocrisy. I do not mean to say that the effect is always such ; but it must be apparent to every sober-minded person, that the reading of pious books, especially the lives of departed saints, has a strong tendency to impart images to the mind, which produce a train of consequences purely mechanical. When a young convert, labouring under all the excitement of ardent feeling, is conscious of the ordeal before him, he will be apt to deceive himself by mistaking the phantoms of the imagination for substantial realities. To a mind thus overcharged, the operation of natural causes will be made to assume a supernatural appearance, and give birth to artificial ideas, more acceptable to the mystic, who delights to revel in what is unintelligible, than to the sober-minded christian.

I do not mean to insinuate that there is no such thing as christian experience. Every one who knows any thing of the power of divine grace in turning him from darkness unto light, and from the slavery of his sinful appetites unto God, must be alive to the value of the change, although he may not be always aware of the precise means by which it has been effected. He may have been subject to divers temptations, the occasion of long and distressing conflicts, and he may have been set free by counteracting influences, various in their kind, and powerful in their operation. The flashes of a guilty conscience may have aroused him from his stupor, or he may have been drawn by the cords of divine love ; but the ostentatious display of these matters in a mechanical form, before a public assembly, mingled as they often are with the delusions of fancy, is agreeable neither to christian sobriety, nor to that unobtrusive modesty which is befitting persons encircled by infirmities. When so forward a profession is followed by indifference or apostasy, real religion becomes the sufferer.

The New Testament knows of no other terms of communion than what may be comprehended in " Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ;" a holy and religious life being the only tangible signs of their reality. Those who are in fellowship with Christ, are one with him ; that is, they drink into the same spirit ; and as he who hath called them is holy, so are they also holy in all manner of

conversation. Their calling to be "saints," that is, sanctified or set apart, obliges them to avoid the contamination of the world, whilst their regeneration or renewal in the spirit of their minds, not effected by water-baptism or any other ecclesiastical observance, but by the inward teaching of the Spirit, evidences itself in the tendency of the affections, or the cultivation of piety towards God, and of good-will to man. The secrets of the heart are known only to Him who penetrates the hidden things of darkness, and is the omniscient discernor of spirits. Man can judge only by appearances, which may be often delusive; but still he must be satisfied to measure the value of the tree by the fruit it bears. The external marks of the christian character, therefore, are those only which are legible to man; and these furnish the most solid grounds for christian communion.

Without any desire to undervalue the attainments of pious and plain-hearted Christians, it is really offensive, both to good taste and to common sense, to erect them into a spiritual court for sitting in judgment upon the qualifications of persons who have had superior opportunities for becoming acquainted with the real nature and evidences of scriptural religion. They may be good judges of fact, and as such the law has qualified them to serve upon juries; but the expounding of the law it has wisely reserved for those who are more conversant with such matters. So, with regard to church-communion, if a man be a notorious evil-liver, if he be known to neglect the obvious duties of religion, and if his temper or conduct be such as to occasion reproach, the simplest Christian may take cognizance of the fact, and pronounce upon his incapacity to participate in Christian privileges. But beyond this he is no authority. To make him an arbiter of opinions which he has never studied would be preposterous; and not less so to make him an inquisitor into the thoughts and intents of the heart, which, when conveyed in a phraseology different to that with which he is most conversant, would appear to him like speaking in a strange tongue.

The composition of many of our churches is known to be such as to forbid the accession of respectable members upon the present terms. To illustrate the subject, I will suppose a case. Some pious country gentleman becomes dissatisfied

with the Church of England, and is desirous of joining a neighbouring dissenting congregation. The pastor is perhaps a respectable man, but his deacons in a humble station of life—say the gentleman's tailor and shoemaker. These are deputed by the church to wait upon him for the purpose of taking a measure of his conscience, and of inquiring into his spiritual attainments. After sitting in judgment upon him, they report to the church, and if their account be satisfactory, a day is appointed for his admission, when he has to pass through the ordeal before mentioned. I am well aware that this is not the uniform practice, the loose connexion subsisting amongst Dissenters allowing of every variety of form; in some, therefore, there is a nearer approximation to Presbytery; but the recognized mode amongst Independents is such as I have stated. It has been justly observed by an advocate for this system of discipline, that "perhaps it were better to be deceived ten times by the profession of candidates, than to run the hazard of excluding one serious soul for want of every mark of attainment or of sincerity which we could desire. Though a person be 'weak in the faith,' he is not to be rejected, but received, in order that he may be strengthened."*

To a well-ordered mind, I need not say how utterly repugnant is such a mode of dealing with religion as that above described, to all those sentiments of refinement and good taste which have so important an influence upon the well-being of society. Dissenters have little reason to fear any detriment to their cause from the influence of fashion, so that they have the less need to provide themselves with stumbling-blocks of so revolting a character. Christianity was never intended to break down the forms and decencies of life, nor to level its distinctions. In offering this unnatural violence we may think to exalt ourselves; but we debase religion, and incur the risk of mockery for our pains. I am not indeed of the opinion of Burke, who is aptly described as taking a sort of baronial view of liberty,† and who sup-

* See a sensible little treatise upon church-government, by Joseph Turnbull, B. A. p. 21. I do not agree with the author in all his views, and think he has scarcely dealt fairly with Dr. Campbell; yet, generally speaking, his work is distinguished by candour, learning and good sense.

† Moore's Life of Sheridan.

posed the order of bishops necessary, from their affinity in rank, for teaching christianity to the higher orders. Any one who is acquainted with the ordinary means of their promotion will smile at the idea. I believe any man of education and gentlemanly habits, if in other respects qualified, is quite equal to the task, and would be listened to with as much attention ; but if we would recommend religion to mankind, we must beware of exacting more than is necessary for its cordial reception.

It has been said, but I think with little reason, that the narrow door opened by the Independents, is the best safeguard for the purity of the church ; and the argument has been appealed to with triumph against the Presbyterians. But such boasting is vain ; for religion never flourished in all respects so well as under their guidance. It is true that in Presbyterian congregations, particularly when numerous, we must look for some who have the form of godliness without the power ; and if the preacher be more concerned to propagate whimsical theories than wholesome knowledge, his people will run the risk of being starved. But what security have we that the same will not be the case in congregations of equal extent amongst the Independents ? If the preacher be of a similar cast, the same consequences will follow, in spite of all the purgations which the members may undergo at their admission ; but whatever may be his character, we should deceive ourselves, were we to suppose that all who pronounce the same shibboleth are genuine Christians. It cannot be unknown to those who use their observation, that our Independent congregations have their full proportion of persons of a worldly character ; and where they abound in young people, they exhibit no little degree of levity. Of the total absence of seriousness in a congregation once of considerable repute, a striking instance fell under my own observation some little time since ; but I forbear a more particular reference. I have no wish to institute invidious comparisons ; but I believe that for scriptural knowledge and solidity of character, the Presbyterians have never been exceeded as a body by any other denomination of Christians. It will be found upon inquiry, that human nature is pretty much the same in all sects and parties, how much soever our

self-love may lead us to imagine the contrary. We may affix bolts and bars, and exercise every precaution, but it will break through them all unless there be some counteracting principle stronger than human devices.

It is very common for Independents to value themselves upon the purity of their faith, which they ascribe to their discipline. But, not to observe that every shade of opinion through all the ramifications of truth and error, is to be found amongst them, even in individual churches there is far from an uniformity of sentiment. Wherever it exists, in any considerable degree, there is reason to suspect a most undesirable inanity. When there is no mind, or, which amounts to the same thing, when it is in utter abeyance, as is the case in societies that are composed exclusively of the lower orders, or of persons destitute of education, whether poor or otherwise, the hand and the tongue will be directed mechanically, like the bark upon the ocean; that is, whithersoever the governor listeth. But the faith they subscribe to is that of their teacher, not their own; so that, under this blind regimen, it is not surprising if those who do not think at all, should not think differently.

We complain, and justly, of the reign of ignorance in the Church of Rome, as must be always the case where the consciences of the people are committed to the custody of their priests. We also witness the inefficacy of articles of faith and acts of Parliament for producing any thing like an uniformity of belief in the Church of England. And whence comes this variety? The superficial may say, it is owing to the inefficiency of the system, to the natural blindness of the human understanding, or to some other far-fetched cause, equally remote from the true solution. This is to be found in the diversity of men's minds, occasioned by an infinite variety of circumstances, over which they have no control, and evincing the extreme folly of attempting to reach the world of intellect by human legislation. From this error, Dissenters have been no more exempt than their neighbours. It is true, they have proceeded upon a smaller scale, but the principle and tendency are the same; the one absurd as opposed to the phenomena of mind, the other calculated to foster hypocrisy. If it should be said,

that churches are voluntary, and may institute any laws they think fit, I readily admit the fact, but not the moral that would be deduced from it. When the acts of a public body are in contradiction to reason, or subversive of justice, there is wanting the main ingredient of all laws—a moral fitness. Societies, not less than individuals, are amenable to public opinion for their actions, which will be estimated rather by the standard of propriety than of abstract right.

Dissenters, above all other people, should be jealous of any encroachment upon private judgment, yet this may be practised as effectually by an appeal to the passions of mankind, as by acts of Parliament. We object, and I think justly, to the moral right of ecclesiastical bodies to legislate in matters of faith, concerning which there can be but one authority binding upon Christians; but when we exact more as the terms of communion, we are obnoxious to the like charge of imposition as that with which we tax our neighbours of the Church of England. Articles of faith, whether they be thirty-nine, or any inferior number, are only so many traps to catch the unwary; for they forestal the judgment, and close the avenues of the mind to that inquiry after knowledge, which is the only legitimate foundation for faith. Human formularies, however excellent in themselves, are no test of truth, and, therefore, no security for it. Men subscribe them in compliance to their imposers, admitting at the same time their truth; but, if they are sincere in the latter, such subscription is superfluous, for their belief being founded upon higher and anterior motives, would be just the same without them. No man, in his right mind, will entertain a proposition merely upon the credit of another; before he gives his assent, he must bring his own understanding in contact with the reasons that support it. My own convictions, however good to me, are of no value to another man, until he takes some lawful means to make them his own property. A perfect uniformity in matters of faith is utterly hopeless; and he who grasps at it, shews but an imperfect acquaintance with the human understanding. Neither is it essential to the cultivation of those feelings that are required of Christians, in order to keep “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” I may think my neighbour to be as much mistaken as he

thinks it is my case; and if we cannot settle the matter, we must agree to differ. But it would be preposterous to allow this difference to disturb our harmony. If we are both children of the light, we shall walk together in brotherly love, having “fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ;” and “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”*

I feel persuaded, that if a spirit of kindness and conciliation were cultivated more extensively amongst professed Christians, the cause of truth and righteousness would be advanced more effectually than by that bitterness and hostility which savour only of a spirit from beneath. We may contend earnestly for what we believe to be the truth, and it becomes us to do so with courtesy upon all fitting occasions; but if we mingle our zeal with rancour, and say to our brother, “Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou,” we may be sturdy champions for the faith, but “how dwelleth the love of God within us?”—“For he who loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?”† I once knew a respectable citizen of London, now no more, who had raised himself by his own exertions, and was a member of an ancient congregation in the city. He was a religious man, in his own way, of considerable acuteness, but, like all narrow-minded persons, of an uncharitable spirit. Being in conversation with him one day, the name of Andrew Fuller, then lately dead, was introduced, and my friend, who had conceived a violent enmity to him for some of his opinions, concluded a bitter harangue, by gravely assuring me that he was then “lifting up his eyes in torment.” The respect I had always cherished for that excellent man, who was no less remarkable for the originality of his talents, than for his useful application of them, produced no little surprise at so hardy an assertion; but I soon found that it was a common

* 1 John i. 3, 7.

† We are told, in the *Life of Oberlin*, one of the finest models of a Christian pastor, that “he administered the sacrament to Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, at the same time; and because they would not eat the same bread, he had on the plate bread of different kinds, wafer leavened and unleavened. In every thing the same spirit appeared; and it extended not only to his Catholic, but to his Jewish neighbours, and made him many friends among them all.”—*Memoirs of John Frederick Oberlin*, p. 177.

feeling amongst persons who were opposed to what they were pleased to term "Fullerism." There is no end to the folly of man, as similar instances of untempered zeal might be produced from other parties, as in the case of the late Dr. Hawker, who pronounced a like fate upon the pious and excellent Mr. Scott; but it is most useful to bear in mind the admonition of the apostle, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."*

I now proceed to another branch of the subject, in which I purpose to suggest some remedies for the evils here glanced at.

Without diving into the records of history, or the principles of human nature, it must be obvious to every person acquainted with common life, that no society, whatever, and much less any congregated number of societies, can hang together without some specific laws, and an executive power for their administration. This power is lodged by the Independents in a majority of members in each individual congregation; by the Presbyterians in a representative body; and by Episcopalians in the civil magistrate. In the first class, although the principle be recognized, yet there is far from any uniformity of practice; for it often happens, that the minister, or some influential member, overrules every thing according to his own wishes. There are, no doubt, advantages and disadvantages under every system; whilst the imperfections of man dispose him to abuse the one, and to uphold the other. In searching for a cure, it is our wisdom to profit by experience, preferring practical utility to imaginative theories, which, however specious, are incompatible with our social condition, and therefore incapable of any useful result.

If there be one principle for which Dissenters have contended more strenuously than another, it is this:—That Jesus Christ is the sole king and law-giver of his church. In obedience to his authority, they think themselves called upon to reject the interference of the civil power in modelling

* Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

its concerns, or in annexing rewards and punishments to any particular mode of its administration. For this view of the subject, they refer confidently to the nature and objects of religion ; which being essentially spiritual and personal, link it closely with the world of mind, and with the well-being of the species. But as knowledge is not intuitive, some method must be devised for giving it publicity. For “how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed ? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard ? And how shall they hear without a preacher ?” In answering these questions, we advance a step further in our inquiry, and may receive some light from the New Testament ; but where this fails, we are thrown upon tradition, and our own judgment of utility.

I must confess I am quite of Dr. Campbell’s mind, that no form of ecclesiastical polity now in being has any legitimate claim to a divine right ; neither are the institutions of the apostolical church so clearly defined in every particular as to prevent the possibility of mistake. This is evident from our ignorance of the precise functions of its earliest officers, and from the uncertainty attending the obligation of customs then in use, but long since abandoned. The circumstances of time and place concur also in rendering it improbable that arrangements, adopted in the infancy of a cause, and in the face of persecution, were intended, in all respects, for a model to after times. But making every allowance for the variable nature of things, and for the uncertainty that exists upon some points, yet there can be no doubt that it is the duty of Christians to approximate, as far as practicable, to the primitive pattern ; and the apostles have left sufficient notices to guide our conduct in the most important particulars.

Before any churches could be formed, there must have been an ingathering of converts. The first preachers, therefore, bore an extraordinary office, in virtue of the gifts confided to them, and went from place to place, declaring their message, just as a door of entrance was opened to them. Such were the apostles, prophets, and evangelists, and some of the first disciples. When the converts became sufficiently numerous to be collected in any one place, they were committed to the care of some experienced guide, for the strengthening of their faith, and the oversight of their conduct, lest they should

bring reproach upon the new religion, or relapse into their former errors. These teachers are called indifferently in the New Testament, by the names of ἐπίσκοπος and πρεσβύτερος, or, bishop and presbyter; the first referring more particularly to their office in the church, and the last to their station in society, as entitling them to especial marks of respect; it was therefore sometimes applied to superior officers in civil life. That neither of these titles denoted superiority or inferiority of office, must, I think, be evident to any candid person, who will be at the pains to compare the different passages in his Greek Testament.

Bishops and presbyters, then, being considered as only different in name, but the same in office, and tantamount to what we understand by the term pastor or shepherd, being the leader of the flock, I proceed to observe, that, from the tenor of the apostolical writings, there appears to have been more than one such in every church. Whether this was the case in each individual congregation, and for the reason assigned by Dr. Campbell, that in case of a dispersion by persecution, there might be one present to administer to their spiritual wants, is perhaps doubtful. It appears to me, as the more probable supposition, that when Christians became too numerous to assemble in one house, they branched off, and became new congregations, the bishops being multiplied according to the number of places for meeting; but that the Christians so divided, for the sake of convenience, continued to maintain a mutual fellowship, having all the officers in common, and the whole forming together but one church. The limits assigned to it would be the extent of the town or city in which they resided; with so much of the surrounding neighbourhood as would allow of a convenient intercourse. This notion seems to be favoured by the phraseology of the Apostle Paul, when he addresses the bishops of the *church* at Corinth, and the *church* at Philippi. He here uses the word church in the singular number. But that the connexion ceased with this boundary, is no less evident from the change of language when the same apostle addresses the Christians of a whole province. He then adopts the plural noun, and talks of the *churches* in Galatia, Macedonia, &c. The district comprising a single church, but composed of several congregations and

meeting-places, received the name of *parochia*, from whence our term parish is derived. That it extended no farther than would enable all the members to congregate together for the management of their concerns, is evident from the meaning of the word, which denotes *neighbourhood*. In the course of time, this was superseded by the term *diocese*, signifying a larger district, and comporting better with the aspiring views of the clergy; who, from trifling concessions at the beginning, acquired a gradual power, until one of their number succeeded eventually in supplanting the rest of his brethren. As one encroachment is the prolific source of others, especially when ambition and worldly aggrandizement are at the bottom, so, in process of time, a number of these dioceses were incorporated under a metropolitan or archbishop, and assumed the name of a province. Patriarchs were of still higher dignity in the church, and, for a long time, enjoyed the supremacy, until it was usurped by the pope. This mystery of iniquity began to work even in the days of the apostles, when there was a Diotrephes who loved to have the pre-eminence, probably from his having been called upon frequently to preside over the meetings of the church. But its full development was left for after times, when an unholy alliance took place between the church and the world; when the ministers of Christ, forsaking their proper calling, became as princes in the earth, and lords over God's heritage.

The exact boundaries of the relation that subsisted between the bishops and their flock, have never been properly defined. That this office embraced nothing but what belonged properly to the affairs of their own church, may be concluded as certain. An important part of it was to teach, exhort, and admonish; to receive converts by baptism, and to administer the Lord's Supper, which they did as often as the church assembled. The simple profession of Christianity, and an obedience to its commands, seem to have been all that was required for communion; and, in those perilous times, they involved no slight hazard. Whether the bishops had any authority, by virtue of their office, independently of the church; and, if so, in what this authority consisted; are questions that cannot now be satisfactorily resolved. That they had some power, as its executive officers, may be fairly conjectured, as well

from the terms employed to designate their office, as from the injunctions of the apostle. See Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24. From these, and other passages, I infer that the bishops of those days had more power than the Independents concede to their ministers; but not a lawless power, nor extending beyond the limits of their own *parochia*. It was, in fact, a government according to known laws, recognized by all the churches. There were many things transacted within the bosom of the church that required the presence and consent of both pastors and people. The vacancies that occurred from time to time amongst the officers of the church, were probably filled up by their joint concurrence. For, besides its bishops, each church had its elders and deacons; both of them invested sometimes with the office of teachers, although the chief business of the latter seems to have been of a temporal nature. In the nomination of bishops, the people, no doubt, had a voice; although in the very earliest times it is probable they acted upon the recommendation of the apostles; but the rite of ordination resided in the bishops or presbyters alone. The rejection of unworthy members was also a joint concern, and perhaps their admission; although, whether in either case it was more than a formal assent to the voice of the bishop, who received the converts, and was the best judge of their qualifications, may be doubted. In those simple times, the character of the persons selected for office was a sufficient guarantee against the abuse of power; for the motives to venality and ambition being as yet unknown, there would be little room for jealousy or suspicion, and the people would place full reliance upon the wisdom and experience of their instructors. When the church assembled for business, it would be necessary to choose a president, who was perhaps the senior bishop; but his office was only temporary, like the moderator of a presbytery. Yet, from so small a matter, I doubt not, arose first of all parochial, and afterwards diocesan episcopacy; although the adjuncts connected with it were, but not until long afterwards, concessions from the civil power.

These remarks upon some of the earliest usages of the Christian church, might be corroborated by a reference to the writings of the apostles and their immediate successors; but as I do not intend this for a treatise upon the subject, such citations

would be inconsistent with the required brevity. My design is merely to state my own impression, in justification of a former remark, that no existing form of church government has any claim to the distinction of a divine right ; and, unless we conform ourselves more entirely to what is known of the apostolical pattern, we may consult the rule of expediency in one case as well as in another.

Having stated my objections to the present loose and unsatisfactory manner in which the Dissenters manage their affairs, and avowed my conviction of the utter inefficacy of such a mode for retrieving them as that suggested by the provisional committee, it will be naturally expected that I should come prepared with a better plan of my own. The question of better or worse can only be decided by an appeal to the good sense of the public ; and there I leave my speculations with confidence, being well assured, that, whatever may be their fate, the good intentions of the writer cannot be mistaken.

An union amongst the Dissenters, to be at all effectual, should embrace, in my apprehension, the following objects :

1. A collection of the scattered materials that serve to constitute what is termed the dissenting interest, into one firm and compacted body, preserving a symmetry in all its parts, with fixed laws for its government.

2. The adoption of such a plan of discipline as may give a rational feature to dissent, whilst it secures, as far as human institutions can do, the great essentials of piety and virtue.

3. An improvement in the mode of conducting public worship.

4. The enlargement of the dissenting interest by the institution of schools, and other methods of instruction, particularly classes of catechumens, scripture readers, and local teachers without ordination ; the whole under the superintendence and management of the pastor.

5. The adoption of some more effectual means for securing a learned and useful ministry.

6. A more liberal support for the ministry in cases where the income falls short of a fair remuneration.

7. A more efficient mode of providing for the planting of

new churches, and for raising suitable buildings for their accommodation.

8. The erection of a proper structure in some central part of the metropolis, where the general business of the body shall be transacted; with the appointment of local and corresponding secretaries to conduct it.

9. The formation of a library upon an extensive scale, for the general use of the body of Dissenters, to be deposited in the building provided for in the last article; with the appointment of a librarian for its care and preservation.

10. A provision for the better security of trust-deeds, testamentary bequests, and church-registers.

11. The preservation and extension of the civil rights of Dissenters.

12. The institution of committees for managing the affairs of the body, each having a distinct object assigned to it.

13. The formation of funds for the support of the several objects proposed by the union.

These, I believe, are the leading purposes to be gained by an incorporation of the Dissenters, and I do not anticipate much objection to the specification; the most serious difficulty will be in the detail of measures that may be necessary for its accomplishment. Here there will be, no doubt, a difference of opinion, and there are obstacles to surmount that will require no ordinary share of wisdom and discretion. The counsels of the prudent will be thwarted by ignorance, and the littleness of individual or local interests will be magnified into an importance prejudicial to the general welfare; but, bad as are the materials to work upon, if the more enlightened amongst the Dissenters will consent to sink their own prejudices, the end may still be accomplished. The great danger is their aiming at too much in the beginning; for a very general co-operation upon any principles of utility can scarcely be expected. If they begin well, and proceed but slowly, their exertions will ensure respect, should they ultimately fail of success.

The means that I propose for effecting the foregoing objects are such as these; and I shall take them in the order just laid down.

1. The adoption of a representative system of church-government, something analogous to that which was attempted in England during the commonwealth, and still prevails in most reformed churches ; but with such modifications as may be suggested by wisdom and experience. In Scotland, the business of parishes is vested in what is called a kirk-session, which meets weekly, and is composed of the pastor, the ruling elders, who are the leading people in the parish, and the deacons, who have the charge of temporal matters. Ruling elders, although a component part of the primitive church, are now superfluous, the original design of their institution being lost. They may therefore be dispensed with ; and, in compliance with the general feeling in behalf of popular assemblies, all matters of importance relating to individual churches may be transacted, as at present, by the voice of the majority.

For the purpose of composing any differences that may arise between the pastor and his people, or between the people themselves ; and to prevent the divisions to which they so frequently give birth, it is desirable to have a court of appeal, which may be found in a Presbytery, composed of twelve, or any other convenient number of neighbouring congregations, represented by the pastor and deacons, and two members chosen by each church. These Presbyteries to assemble monthly, in rotation, at the different towns and villages of which they are composed, and proceed to business after public service, the senior minister, or some influential layman, being appointed moderator. London, upon account of its extent, might be conveniently divided into four of these Presbyteries ; and some of the large towns in the kingdom would comprise a single one. This single step in church government may answer to our monthly associations, only they would be more efficient, and their demarcations somewhat different.

For common purposes, these Presbyteries, if composed of grave and experienced persons, might be sufficient ; more especially as from local knowledge they would have the best means of information upon the various matters that might be brought before them. But, as local prejudices sometimes interfere with justice, and circumstances may arise to call for the deliberate counsel of a larger body, recourse may be had

to quarterly Synods, composed of a larger number of churches within a given district. This assembly may be constituted either of deputations from each Presbytery within its circuit, or of the pastors and representatives of each congregation, in the same manner as the Presbyteries. Besides the advantages of calm and deliberate discussion, and of grave counsel, these assemblies would afford a chain of communication between the pastors and members of our churches, highly conducive to union and brotherly affection, and diffusing a sympathetic influence through the whole body.

A fourth and final stage of communication, conferring additional strength to the body, would be by an annual meeting of the Dissenters throughout the kingdom, in the persons of their representatives. These to be selected by the several Presbyteries, and to consist of two ministers and two laymen from each, having the charge of all the concerns of the district; and the judgment of the General Assembly, in all cases, to be final. The annual meeting of the deputies should be held always, I think, in London, and at the house of the institution, in a large room provided for the purpose. Some influential layman would perhaps be most proper to fill the office of president, to be chosen annually; and a clerk would be necessary to take down minutes of all the proceedings.

As all matters of a trifling nature would be settled by the Presbyteries, those of importance only should come before the General Assembly, to be submitted by the local bodies, and determined by a majority of votes. With the private arrangements of individual churches it would not meddle; but whatever affected the body generally would properly fall under its cognizance. Amongst other things, it would determine the propriety of founding new churches and raising buildings for their accommodation, with the degree of assistance to be afforded for that object. A material part of its duty would be to prevent divisions in churches, which should be sanctioned only in the case of excessive numbers. When a minister proves himself unfit for his office by gross negligence, or immoral conduct, his people, instead of promoting a separation, should carry their case to the Presbytery; and if they fail of a remedy there, to the General Assembly, who should have the power of deposing him from his office. Under so

compact a system, divisions would rarely take place ; for, if any discontented people chose to separate, they would receive no countenance from the neighbouring ministers, nor would they obtain a pastor recognized by the dissenting body. The power of ordination would reside with the Presbyteries, and they would be careful to ordain none without proper credentials.

Whatever objection may be advanced by Independents to the ecclesiastical terms employed upon this occasion, it should be remembered, that we are to look less to words than to the essence of things. Besides, they have already in operation two ingredients of the system, at least something analogous to them ; and the last, which is the most important, they are now coveting. The only remaining one bears so near an affinity to their own associations, that it cannot be objected to upon the score of principle, and must be determined by its expediency.

A machine, of such power as is here contemplated, will, I know, be repugnant to many whose feelings have been long associated with the democratic scheme of Independency. Let those who admire that system, try to purify it without a departure from its original principles ; and when they have arrived at the end of their labours, they will find themselves just where they now are,—in the back-ground of improvement, and surrounded by all the inconveniences of which they now complain. Government must reside somewhere, and the only question is, whether it shall continue in detached mobs independent of each other, and with a preponderating weight of ignorance in the scale ; or, in the collective wisdom of their representatives, who, with minds better trained, and with superior means of information, are more alive to the value of character, and more competent to discharge their trust for the general welfare. For my part, I have no hesitation as to my own choice.

2. In recommending the adoption of a new plan of discipline, I refer chiefly to the present mode of admitting members, as usual amongst the Independents. Experiences, confessions of faith, and church-covenants, should be discarded, for the reasons before given, and their place supplied

by something more consonant to sober sense. As the pastor is the organ of the church, and considered fit to discharge the high trust reposed in him, he is the properest judge of the qualifications of a candidate for church-fellowship. It may be the business of the deacons to inquire into his moral character, which will be usually known in his own neighbourhood; and, when they are satisfied, his name may be reported to the church. If any member has aught against him, let him publicly declare it, that the matter may be inquired into, and the person received or rejected accordingly. This simple method would obtain for the Dissenters a larger number of respectable members than they can now boast; and, if their pastors are upright men, the cause of virtue and religion would be no sufferer.

There is another point of discipline sanctioned by the Independents, that, to a sober mind, is highly objectionable. This is, the practice of putting forward young men to pray and exhort at their church-meetings. In the primitive church, the bishops and teaching elders were appointed to this office, and I see no good reason for departing from so wholesome a precedent. The mischiefs attendant upon the present custom I need not dwell upon; they are known to many ministers, to their mortification and sorrow. The thing is unseemly in itself, fosters conceit, and bestows an artificial reputation upon piety; and it is calculated to expose religion to the derision of by-standers. There cannot be a more useful lesson inculcated upon the members of churches, than that which teaches them the duties appropriate to their respective stations, and the wisdom of confining themselves within the sphere which nature, and the laws of society, have prescribed to them. When they transgress these limits, they become obnoxious to the sarcastic observations of South, that "many a man has run his head against a pulpit, who would cut a much better figure at a plough-tail."

3. The accidental circumstances that contribute to raise up preachers amongst the Dissenters, and the different plans pursued with respect to those who are educated for the office, occasion necessarily a variety in the mode of conducting public worship. A greater uniformity in this respect is desirable,

and it can only be hoped for by the consistent conduct of an authorized body, communicating the tone to its constituents. It has been often urged against Dissenters, that they do not make the reading of the Scriptures sufficiently prominent in their worship ; and the former practice of the Independents gave too much countenance to the charge. A chapter out of each Testament would perhaps be sufficient, and always the one from whence the text is taken. In order to bring the people better acquainted with the Scriptures, an expository discourse may fitly occupy one of the services every week ; and this plan, pursued through a series of years, would elicit much useful information. I have mentioned the subject to several judicious ministers of different communions, who have uniformly given it their concurrence ; but the prejudices of the people in favour of a formal sermon, have prevented their adopting it. Surely, it is high time that so depraved a taste be corrected ; for “ no sermons,” says Dr. Stonehouse, “ are equally useful with expository sermons ;”^{*} and we are indebted to them for many valuable illustrations of the Scriptures.

I have adverted before to the love of display that too often disfigures our young academics ; and also to the bad taste in which their sermons are conceived. Every thing artificial is at variance with that simplicity and sincerity which should characterize the preacher of the gospel, and are his best passport to usefulness. Those who take upon themselves the office of public instructors, should use all diligence to make themselves acquainted with the nature of their message, and shun no fair opportunity for delivering it faithfully, agreeably to their best convictions. But, in a course of years, studious men will sometimes find occasion to change or modify their opinions ; so that modesty, which is always desirable, is particularly so in a young preacher, lest he expose himself to the charge of presumption. The pulpit should never be turned into an *arena* for controversy ; yet too often do we hear the preacher deal out his diatribes in the most offensive language, as if people were to be scolded into an opinion, or frightened out of their conviction by his passionate expressions. Sensible men find out a more direct avenue to the understanding, and Christian men will not indulge in bitterness, wrath, and

^{*} Letters to Stedman, II. 96.

evil-speaking. Abstruse subjects should be avoided as much as possible, and those of a controverted nature dealt with in a Christian spirit. Plain practical preaching, such as is calculated to arouse men from their stupor, and to illustrate and enforce the various branches of the Christian character, is every way preferable to that which stirs up unholy passions, or engenders a spiritual quietism. We have a large class of men who disdain talking to any but Christians, as if the commission to preach the gospel was not general, and visible means were unnecessary for its success. It has been well observed by a judicious friend of mine, that, "if the apostles had thought so, their system would have prevented them from attempting the conversion of a single Gentile." With these preachers, the secret purposes of the Almighty, of which, by the way, they know no more than other people, absorb all other subjects; but whilst they dole out the husks from their own penurious treasury, the souls of their people are starving for lack of knowledge. If we would make solid and judicious Christians, we must not indulge in reveries of the imagination, but rather study those things that make for edification.*

The mode of conducting the devotional part of our worship, is not always so solemn nor so methodical as may be desired. Sometimes it partakes of an odious familiarity; at others, of too much grimace. What is called preaching in prayer, should always be avoided; and to hear the Deity addressed, as is sometimes the case, in scraps of poetry, is quite insufferable. The tendency of prayer should be to raise the thoughts of the congregation to its proper object, and to inspire them with such devotional sentiments as may kindle and animate the affections. In order to this, the speaker must familiarize himself with the language of

* The following description of a good preacher, by Le Clerc, is deserving attention: "Pour faire un bon prédicateur, selon l'idée que nous en avons aujourd'hui, il faut bien des choses, qui se trouvent très-rarement ensemble. Il faut avoir étudié l'Evangile, dans sa source, c'est-à-dire, dans les Ecritures, l'avoir bien médité, en sentir la beauté, et en être tout pénétré. Il faut connoître le cœur humain, pour être capable de le remuer. Il faut savoir raisonner juste, et ranger ses pensées, en sorte que ceux qui les lisent, ou qui les écoutent en soient convaincus; non sans savoir, mais parce-qu'ils en voyent la solidité. Il faut exprimer ses pensées, avec netteté et avec agrément. Je ne dis rien de la prononciation, il suffit qu'elle soit celle d'un homme convaincu et touché de ce qu'il dit. Sans cela, on ne peut ébranler personne, quand même on excellerait, dans toutes les autres règles de l'art." *Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne*, tome xvi. p. 224.

Scripture, and of our best practical writers ; but, as in copying the sentiments of others, there is always danger of imbibing artificial ideas, it is of importance to cultivate the *spirit of prayer*. For the sake of order and propriety, it is desirable that prayers should be digested before they are uttered in the pulpit ; yet, not so as to prevent that freedom of the mind which is necessary to infuse life and vigour in the service. Many of our prayers are so tiresomely prolix as to suspend the attention, and induce a weariness incompatible with the spirit of devotion. This may be avoided by breaking the prayer into two parts, with the intervention of singing. The first should be of a general nature, with the view of composing the minds of the congregation, and bringing them into a proper disposition for worship ; the second adapted more to the exigencies of particular cases, but never exceeding the period of twenty minutes. Much has been said and written concerning the posture of prayer, upon which, I think, Dissenters have erred greatly. They will often stand to sing, but sit down as soon as the minister begins to address the Almighty, than which, nothing can be more irreverent. Surely the posture we adopt in our domestic circles is the fittest for public worship ; and herein we may take a wholesome lesson from our neighbours of the Church of England. If our places of worship are not constructed for the convenience of kneeling, they should be so altered as to admit of it. Although the posture itself is so much a matter of indifference as not to be regarded by Him to whom the language of the heart alone can be acceptable ; yet that which administers best to the seclusion of the mind, and prevents it from being distracted by surrounding objects, seems the best adapted for purposes of devotion. I shall not enter here into the question of liturgies, which were certainly in very early use, and may be so constructed as to free them from the objections which are very justly urged against that of the Church of England. Such compositions have their advantages and disadvantages ; but the feeling of Dissenters being generally against them, it will not be necessary for me to strike the balance. Some good remarks upon the subject may be seen in “ A New Directory for Nonconformist Churches,” published several years ago.

Another matter, calling for reformation, relates to our psalmody. The discordance with which this is performed in many places, is not only grating to a sensitive ear, but sometimes truly ludicrous. Every thing calculated to disturb the gravity so requisite in the worship of God, should be carefully avoided. As places of worship are no theatres for the exhibition of public performers, bands of singers should find no place there. These are not only an obstruction to congregational singing, but frequently occasion disputes highly injurious to the usefulness of a minister, and to the peace of his people. In the choice of a clerk, the chief qualification to be attended to, next to personal piety, is his fitness to lead the congregation; and he would be joined by all who take pleasure in this delightful part of devotion. If the children in our schools were taught the proper use of their voice by some competent person, there would never be any deficiency of qualified clerks, nor of general singers.

The numerous collections of hymns that are continually starting up, is another evil that requires a remedy. Almost every minister has now his favourite collection, which is not only a nuisance, as levying an unnecessary tax upon the pockets of the people, but is destructive of that uniformity which is desirable in public worship. The compositions of Watts and Doddridge, notwithstanding the bad taste employed by sectarian reviewers to disparage them, have never been equalled as a whole; although just exceptions may be taken to the style and sentiment of particular portions, as must be the case with all human compositions. Any attempt to supersede them, is therefore quite preposterous. At the same time, it will be granted, that many excellent compositions of this kind, and some of them of a superior character, are to be found scattered in the works of later writers, and there is no impropriety in availing ourselves of their assistance, in order to diversify the worship. I would therefore recommend an ample collection, under the auspices of the united body of Dissenters, to be used occasionally in all the congregations that compose the union; and, as the sale would be constant, it would afford a permanent source of revenue for the general purposes of the body.

It has been the fashion of late to introduce musical instruments into public worship. This is an innovation for which our forefathers would have blushed; and the discordant sounds produced by them, generally, will be no recommendation even to the lovers of church-music. I am no such enemy to these accompaniments, if good, as to press any very serious objections to them, although I think their tendency is to distract the attention from the subject to the performance; upon which account, I prefer the music of conjoint voices. This, however, I am free to acknowledge, is very much a matter of taste.

Another deviation from ancient usage is, the use of the gown, a matter of no importance in itself, but as a symbol of conformity, and administering to the pride and pomposity of the wearer. I have heard of some who would sooner relinquish their services than omit a badge so essential to the indulgence of their vanity. This is truly contemptible, to say no worse. In the rage for innovation, many have gone so far as to adopt the liturgy, and habit themselves in a white surplice. The object for so doing is apparent, and it may answer very well as a matter of financial speculation; but it is becoming "all things to all men" with a witness. Surely these apes at conformity had better go over to the Church at once, and no longer bring reproach upon a body to which they do not properly belong. Whilst these practices continue, no one can say, that the taunts which are continually thrown at Dissenters are unmerited; nor will they escape the sarcasms of their enemies, until they adopt some contrivance for keeping their party more pure and unmixed.

I am very far from wishing to lay an undue stress upon matters that are in themselves of no intrinsic value, and derive their importance only from the connexion in which they stand; but it may be of use to point out the progressive departure of Dissenters from the principles and customs of their forefathers, whose Nonconformity we tacitly condemn, in symbol with practices which were to them "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." We may think them to have been too precious about trifles, as our posterity may think of us; but whatever superior importance we may and ought to attach to the weightier matters of the law, still it is by such trifles that

men are congregated into communities, and impress a lasting character upon society.

4. Whatever value may be attached to the extraneous methods of propagating religion, so much the fashion of the present day, yet, if we would establish the dissenting interest upon a respectable and permanent basis, we must resort to some more efficient and orderly process. Every congregation should have a school attached to it, for the benefit of the poorer members who cannot afford the expense of education; each sex to have a separate room, fitted up with the proper implements of instruction, and under the direction of experienced persons, to be paid by the congregation. The business of tuition should not be confined to the Sundays, nor merely to religious subjects; but be proceeded in daily, and embrace writing, arithmetic, with the elements of useful knowledge suited to their station in life; and the girls should be qualified for useful industry. In most congregations there would be found benevolent persons in the middle rank of life to superintend in rotation, as well to overlook the stated instructors, as to assist with the superior means of information.

Instead of three public services upon the Sunday, it would be more useful if the pastor were to devote either the afternoon or the evening to the religious instruction of the young people in his congregation, arranged in classes according to their ages and attainments. Parents should encourage these catechetical exercises by sending their children, who would reap the benefit in future life; whilst it would attach them to the scene of their early years, and create a permanent stock for the prosperity of the church. It must be obvious, that in order to render such a system productive, the pastor must be himself an effective man, "apt to teach, patient, and gentle unto all men." The materials to assist his judgment in this arduous enterprize are not wanting. Many capacious minds have poured forth their stores to illustrate the principles of knowledge, and the right procedure of the understanding, in order to render them available. From the days of Locke and Watts, we have had a succession of writers who have bent their powers to the simplification of knowledge, which is now accessible in the most familiar and ingenious forms. It

requires but judgment to adapt it to the capacity of the learner, and a well-taught mind to give it a useful direction. Vestry libraries, formed under the direction of the pastor, and available by all the members, would contribute largely to the diffusion of knowledge and piety, and should be attached to every church.

Dissenters would promote their own prosperity, as well as that of religion in general, by instituting in every congregation a class of *Scripture-readers*, whose business it should be to visit their poor and ignorant neighbours, for the purpose of communicating to them the word of life. Their labours should be confined to the reading of the Scriptures, religious conversation, and the distribution of suitable tracts. As much prudence would be required in the discharge of their duty, a corresponding care would be necessary in selecting proper persons for this office. *Local teachers* would be another useful class in our churches; and respecting them, the same caution would be doubly necessary. They should not be preachers, at least in the usual acceptation of the term, but confine themselves to the reading of plain practical sermons, with such devotional exercises as may be selected by their pastor. The sphere of their labours should be the villages in their own immediate neighbourhood, where a room or cottage might be taken for the purpose; and any people who may become awakened, should be received as members of the neighbouring church. Should they become sufficiently numerous, in a course of time, to form a society amongst themselves, and possess the means of supporting a pastor, they may be formed into a separate church; but otherwise, it is better that they should stand connected with a distant congregation, being visited occasionally by the pastor for their instruction and confirmation in the faith. A church constituted upon some such plan, branching out in various directions, with the addition, if need be, of a second pastor, would be not only more efficient by concentrating its resources, but it would present a more goodly appearance than a number of small detached societies, with inefficient instructors, engaged in trade, or starving upon a miserable pittance.

5. Before Dissenters can hope for that reputation in society

which is an important passport to usefulness, they must take some further steps to secure an able and efficient ministry. In order to this, it will be necessary to employ none in future but those who have received an academical education ; which can only be effected by common consent and mutual compact. For the purpose of creating a supply equal to the demand, which would be kept down by the regulations I have just suggested, colleges may be founded in central situations, with competent tutors in every department of useful learning ; and it would be attended with many advantages if they were not confined to students in divinity. Dissenters who are desirous of giving their children a sound education, are now obliged to send them to the public schools in connexion with the Establishment, which is one mode of thinning their quarters ; but if a liberal education were afforded upon a respectable scale in their own community, this alternative would be avoided. The charge for educating gentlemen's sons, whether for private life or for the public professions, would greatly assist the funds of the establishment, which might hope also for further support from the patrons of learning generally. A mixture of students would be attended with considerable advantages to those intended for divinity. Not the least of these would be, to enlarge and liberalize their minds ; to improve their manners ; and to create connexions that might be serviceable to them in future life. The theological seminaries now in existence might be rendered available to the purposes of the union, by being placed upon such a foundation as to answer the objects here specified ; or, if this cannot be effected, others might be set on foot. In the mean time, until something can be done to answer the purpose of a public university, it would be better to send our theological students to the Scotch universities, where a sound education may be procured at a reasonable rate ; for it is notorious, that those of our ministers who have gone there, are, generally speaking, by far the best qualified for their profession.

It will be objected, I know, to this scheme for a learned ministry, that it would be impossible to obtain from it a supply, not merely for the places already in existence, but for others that are constantly starting up upon every side. To

this I reply, that people are not warranted in undertaking more than they can accomplish; and that a little good, effected upon a rational foundation, is more to be desired than the slovenly performance of more extensive projects. This last I take to be one of the great sins of the present day, and doubt very much whether the benefit to society is at all commensurate with the noise and bustle that accompany their execution. One efficient pastor, if he be a Pavillon or an Oberlin, is worth a hundred journeymen preachers, and the effect of his labours upon society will be more permanently useful.* Our great error, as I hinted before, is in aiming at quantity rather than quality, without considering that the latter is the best precursor of the former, which is sure to follow in its train, although more slowly, perhaps, than our sanguine wishes could desire. Still, if we would attain the end, we must pursue the means; and if the one be the prosperity of the dissenting interest, we are not likely to arrive at it, unless the other be more eminent for wisdom and prudence than I fear is now the case.

6. As dissenting ministers are dependent, for the most part, upon the voluntary contributions of their hearers, their incomes must vary according to the circumstances of their congregations, and the degree of estimation in which they are held by them. In London, and a few other large places, their salaries are generally equal to what can be expected, or indeed desired. But it is otherwise in the country, where they are barely sufficient for a maintenance, and certainly not to procure them those conveniencies that are essential to the

* Nicholas Pavillon was the pious and indefatigable Bishop of Alet, an *unique* of his order. Of his useful labours, his simple habits and his exemplary life, there is a brief narrative, by the excellent Claude Lancelot, one of the illustrious members of Port Royal. Mrs. Schimmelpenninck has rendered great service to the religious world, by translating this piece, and appending it to her valuable Memoirs of the Port Royalists, a highly gifted and spiritually-minded people, whose history cannot be read without the deepest interest, and a devout wish to copy their disinterested piety.—The Memoirs of John Frederic Oberlin, lately published, is another valuable addition to the stock of Christian biography. Belonging to a different communion to Pavillon, but drinking into the same spirit of piety, he was no less useful in devoting his versatile talents to the moral and political improvement of his countrymen. The greatness of his character, and the magnitude of his labours, considering his limited means, entitle him to a high place amongst the heroes of Christianity.

unembarrassed discharge of their duties. That "the labourer is worthy of his hire," is as true of the ministerial as of any other profession ; and the labour that is the product of mind, is perhaps entitled to the highest rate of reward. It is not reasonable that men, who are destined to occupy a station of respectability and usefulness, should be straitened in their circumstances, nor exposed to the temptations that result from the inconvenience of poverty. No pretensions to the sublime motive of doing good, can justify the practice of sending such men to starve amongst beggars. In places that afford no adequate means of support, it were better for the people to be joined to some neighbouring congregation, in the manner before hinted at.

In urging a more liberal support of the dissenting ministry, I am far from thinking that the profession should be made the road to wealth, by the offer of large prizes to those who engage in it. When these exist in an excessive degree, as in the Church of England, they become a bounty to negligence and worldly pursuits, and operate as so many sinecures for the support of the idle. But there is a degree of remuneration to which the active pastor and the laborious divine is justly entitled, so as to satisfy his lawful necessities, and to place him beyond the reach of temptation. To estimate its amount with accuracy, it will be necessary to take into account the station of life in which he moves. If he has been a mechanic, a guinea a week is perhaps more than he could have reckoned upon in the line he has quitted, and, considering the class of persons with whom he associates, quite adequate to his legitimate wants in his new calling. If he be a half-bred minister, educated upon charity, he will have artificial wants requiring a larger supply, which, if his congregation be numerous, will be provided for generally in a proportion equal to the station which he holds in society. Piety of itself, however worthy of estimation, confers no pretensions to rank ; its temporal demands are, therefore, more easily satisfied. But learning and education are usually the precursors of refinement, and furnish a passport to society equivalent to the matter of wealth. Persons thus gifted are, therefore, entitled to more honourable support, and may fairly lay claim to the elegancies as well as to the conveniencies of life. The income

of such persons, even in obscure situations, should never fall short of from £200 to £300 a year; and in large places, they should double that amount. If many of our congregations are too poor to raise an adequate salary, it deserves to be considered, by what means they have been reduced to this pauper condition, and how they may be restored to a state of prosperity.

No effectual improvement in the salaries of dissenting ministers can be expected, without the accession of more wealth and influence to their body; neither is this to be looked for, unless their administration of religion be made to assume a less repulsive character. Let them remodel their institutions upon some rational principles of gospel-order, such as I have here stated, and they will hold up a respectable front to society, entitling them to the support of the pious and the intelligent of every station. There can be no doubt, that political reasons have united with the causes before mentioned, to depress the Dissenters, particularly the operation of the Test and Corporation Acts, which have swept away much wealth and rank from their quarters. It is true, these are now repealed, but not before the damage has been inflicted, never perhaps to be wholly repaired. Time, and the influence of good sense, with common prudence upon their part, may, however, have considerable effect in reviving their cause; and now, that so much discontent prevails amongst serious and enlightened men in the Church of England, an opportune season presents itself for bringing about such a reform amongst ourselves, as may be the means of strengthening our interest, and placing it upon a large and respectable basis.

7. Having already glanced at the most eligible mode of planting new congregations, our next inquiry concerns the buildings for their accommodation. The bad taste so long displayed by the Dissenters in this matter, has attracted the notice of every admirer of architecture. In our own days, indeed, there has been some improvement in a few large places; but there seems no good reason why it should not be extended generally. The necessity of the times obliged our ancestors to seek obscurity in holes and corners, but this

no longer exists, so that our edifices should now assume the importance of public buildings. The chaste designs of the ancients furnish the best models of external beauty, combining elegance with simplicity: and the interior should be fitted up with a view to accommodation, rejecting all superfluous ornament. To acquire correctness of taste, the management of this portion of our concerns should be lodged in a standing committee; the pastor and deacons of the church for whose use the building is intended, to be members of the committee for the time being. With regard to the ways and means, a certain proportion of the expense,—say two-thirds, shall be raised by the church wanting the accommodation; the remainder to be discharged out of a common fund, appropriated to such cases by the general body. No building to be erected upon any other than freehold land; to be enrolled in chancery; and vested in the trustees of the whole corporation.

It is a material part of the plan suggested in these pages, to make all its parts subservient to one grand design. Every member of the body will therefore have an interest in common with the whole; its buildings and its funds will be one joint property, subject to the several uses to which they are assigned. A scheme of so extensive a nature cannot, of course, come into full operation at once. There must be a reservation of existing rights, settled by law, in reference to the old churches that may become members of the union; at least, until such time as, by death or otherwise, this part of the scheme can be perfected. The measure, with respect to them, therefore, can be considered only as prospective; but it is an important part of the project, and absolutely essential to its success.

8. For the purpose of carrying on the business of the corporate body, it will be requisite to erect a suitable edifice in a central part of the metropolis: somewhere to the north-west, without the boundaries of the city, would, I think, be the most eligible spot. One of the Greek temples would furnish the best model for its exterior. Within, it should be divided into a number of apartments, suited to the several objects for which they are intended. These are, a large room

for the annual meeting of the deputies ; several committee rooms ; one or more for a library ; a strong room for the deposit of deeds and registers ; and apartments for the librarian and secretary :— the whole building to be fire-proof. This property, and all other belonging to the associated body, should be vested in the hands of at least twenty-five trustees, elected at first by a general meeting appointed for the purpose, and afterwards, as vacancies occur, by the annual General Assembly.

The largest half of the trustees to consist of laymen, and the whole to be chosen indifferently from London and the country. The treasurer, the secretaries, and all the officers of the corporation, including the several committees, should be nominated by the General Assembly. This body, as the fountain of power, should have the supreme control over all matters affecting the general welfare of the union,—the appointment of its officers, the disposal of its funds, and the correction of its abuses. Responsible only to public opinion, the wisdom of its proceedings will be regulated by that of its individual members ; but, as a representative body, chosen for so many important purposes, it may be supposed to concentrate the collective intelligence of the whole. As a security to the public for the just performance of its functions, it may be desirable that an abstract of its proceedings should be published annually ; for which purpose, a clerk would be necessary to keep a regular journal of its acts.

9. As books are the tools of learning, an important part of this plan is, the creation of a good library, to consist, first of all, of books of reference. In pursuit of this object, it would be desirable to collect every thing that has a tendency to illustrate the history and principles of Nonconformity ; and in connexion with this, the best writers upon church-history, both British and foreign. After this, we may proceed to the Greek and Latin fathers ; to commentators and biblical critics ; and to the most approved writers, of all sects, in the different departments of theology. An uniform set of the Greek and Roman classics would be also a desideratum, together with the best dictionaries and lexicons in all languages. The best works upon British and foreign history

may also claim a place in such a collection, together with works upon biography and literary history. Towards laying a good foundation, much assistance may be expected from public-spirited individuals in our own body; notoriety would bring forward accessions; and before the lapse of many years, it might be expected to occupy a conspicuous place amongst the libraries of the metropolis. The librarian should be always a dissenting minister, not eligible until he is past forty, without a pastoral charge, and either a single man or a widower. As a blockhead would be unfit to have the handling of books, he should be required to produce testimonials of an academical education. It should be a part of his duty to keep a manuscript catalogue of the books, according to some scientific arrangement, with a reference to the shelf where they are to be found; and the books themselves should be classed methodically, according to their subjects. The trustees of the library should be those of the associated body; but it would be desirable to have a book-committee, to control the librarian, and also to regulate the time and mode of admission, the purchase of new books, and other incidental matters. Every contributor to the formation of the library, above a certain amount, should have a free admission for life; also every dissenting minister, who shall become a member of the union; other persons to be admitted by a ticket from one of the book-committee. I forbear to name any sum as a qualification for a life-admission, because any thing in the shape of a bargain should be scrupulously avoided by a professedly religious society. Every one who wishes well to the institution, will contribute according to his ability, without the stimulus of a mercenary motive, and the more liberal his donation, the greater will be the facility for the accomplishment of the object. He who has the consciousness of doing well, requires no meaner motive to yield him satisfaction. It will be necessary, however, that an amount of some kind should be fixed, and this I leave to the discretion of others. But the idea of making a money-bargain, by bestowing exclusive privileges upon different classes of contributors, as some have suggested, is, I think, of too mean a nature to be entertained in a matter of this kind, and savours more of the petty calculations of a counting house, than of those noble

and generous motives that should influence an enlightened body. The same remark will apply equally to the project of a different scale for clerical and lay-contributors. The time for such distinctions is gone by, and Dissenters should be the last persons to encourage them. Let them give to their clergy whatever honour their merits may command ; but to grant them exclusive privileges in matters of a civil nature, is what has been the bane of the Christian Church.

10. The little care that has been taken hitherto, in many instances, of the trust-deeds of meeting-houses and charitable bequests, suggests the propriety of adopting some measures for their greater security. Having proposed that all places built in future by the associated body shall become common property, it will be expedient to have a strong room in the metropolitan building for the safe custody of the writings. The title-deeds of testamentary bequests and other legal documents should be also lodged in the same place ; as may all manuscripts of any value. As church-registers are often lost, through the ignorance or carelessness of the persons to whom they are confided, and the security of property thereby endangered, it would be desirable that authentic copies, properly signed and attested by the pastor and deacons of every church within the sphere of the union, should be transmitted annually to the secretary, to be deposited amongst the archives of the institution. An authentic register of all births, marriages, and burials amongst the Dissenters, is another *desideratum* that may be accomplished by this project. It may be furnished at stated periods by all the associated ministers, properly attested by witnesses, and carefully deposited with other papers of value. It should be the business of some person appointed for the purpose, to keep indexes to all deeds, registers, and other documents, for easy reference. At first, it may be committed to the librarian ; but, when the business shall have accumulated, a special secretary will become necessary. It is not unreasonable to expect, that, in due time, an act of parliament may be obtained to legalize all registers kept at the house of the institution, and indeed the acts of the body generally ; for it is neither just nor rational, that the polity of one sect should be made the

precedent for decisions upon the usages of another, which, in some respects, are of a directly opposite character.

11. So long as a monopoly of privilege shall be conceded by the civil power to any one party in the community, it becomes the excluded to be watchful over their own rights, and to aim at their extension, to the utmost limits prescribed by reason and justice. By the recent concessions of the legislature, the sovereignty of the Church of England has received a mortal wound; and time will, no doubt, divest the same body of its remaining advantages over other sects. But, to attain this end, legitimate means must be employed; and it will be the business of a committee, answering to the Society of Deputies, both to watch over our existing privileges, and to seize upon every favourable opportunity for enlarging them. The matters that now call the most loudly for redress relate chiefly to baptisms and marriages; to our exclusion from the public schools and universities; and to tithes, and other burthens, for the support of a system of worship with which we do not accord.

By these suggestions, I have no design to alarm my episcopal friends with any hostile demonstrations towards them or their worship. Let episcopacy stand upon its own merits, unincumbered by state-patronage, and it will find its level in common with other opinions. All contentions amongst rival sects would then cease, at least they should do so; for whatever varieties may continue to exist in men's minds, they furnish no legitimate ground for a disturbance of social intercourse. Public opinion is the only rational tribunal for the decision of controverted questions, and if left to itself, will ultimately decide aright. The errors into which it diverges, the result of ignorance or inattention, can be corrected only by education, the strongest safeguard to truth and virtue. Private individuals may entertain strong opinions upon disputed subjects, and they have a right to give them utterance; but that man is to be pitied, whatever may be his religion, who gives them a paramount place to the royal law of charity. This law teaches us to love our neighbour, without reference to his creed; the errors of which we are not called upon to

avenge, but rather to look well to our own, that, when weighed in the balance, we may not be found wanting.

I am not of the number of those who think it a matter of indifference what a man believes. All truth is of more or less importance, and has an influence of some sort upon the destinies of mankind; and it cannot be doubted, that all men gifted with opportunities are bound to search it out and judge for themselves, but not for another. "To our own master we must stand or fall;" and "one is our master, even Christ." He that would injure me for my misbelief, expects, no doubt, that I should act towards him in like manner; at least, he would do so if at all consistent; his own errors being as obnoxious to me as mine are to him. But, if each one followed out his own narrow prejudices, society would be in a state of perpetual warfare; and Christians, instead of copying the image of him they call Master, would be more fitly described as the subjects of the adversary, who "goeth about seeking whom he may devour." That this is not more the case, is owing rather to the indifference that pervades the rulers of the world, who hold the balances of justice, than to any wide exemplification of the Christian spirit, which, if it prevailed more extensively, would go far towards the mitigation of mental error. It is through the avenue of the affections that we have the best access to the understanding, which is not to be forced, but rather dealt with by kindness and charity.

12. For the purpose of conducting the multifarious concerns of so large a body, it would be necessary to institute several committees of management, all appointed by, and under the control of the General Assembly. Those that occur to me as necessary, having separate funds for distinct objects, are an education committee; a building committee; a book committee; one for the support of necessitous ministers and their widows; and another for the protection of our civil rights. There would also be one for general purposes, to correspond upon all undefined matters; and each would have to draw up a report of the year's proceedings, to be laid before the annual meeting. Every committee must have a

secretary, whom it would choose itself from its own number, and whose services should be gratuitous.

13. It must be evident that schemes of so extensive a nature as those above contemplated, cannot be effected without considerable funds. How these are to be raised and applied, remains now to be considered. The Dissenters, or at least those who pass under the name, must be allowed to be a numerous body, and in the possession of much individual wealth, which is freely circulated for benevolent objects. To paralyze their exertions in the furtherance of any useful schemes that may be pursued with cordiality by Christians of all denominations, is no part of my design. On the contrary, the more freely they can unite together for the promoting of the common cause of Christianity, the greater will be the advantage to themselves, as well as to the object they espouse. But so long as men shall be divided into parties, it is a duty they owe to their own principles to provide for their efficient support.

In the event of such an union as is here contemplated, much of the money that is now collected for insufficient and desultory objects, would be concentrated, and applied to those only of a really dissenting character. Before it could be commenced, however, it would be necessary to raise a large sum by voluntary subscription, to be applied to the central building, and other purposes of an initiatory nature. This would be, perhaps, one of the most serious difficulties to encounter. Yet, when we consider the immense sums that are raised annually in the religious world, for foreign objects, and some of them of a sectarian character, it would be hard if the Dissenters, notwithstanding their proverbial apathy, should be so far indifferent to their own concerns as to neglect any favourable opportunity for improving them, by withholding their support. Zeal is not wanting to arouse their energies in behalf of matters that do not immediately concern them as Dissenters; and I should hope, that if a rational scheme were brought forward, under the sanction of respectable persons, the remembrance of what has been done and suffered for their cause by those who have gone before them, would kindle a generous ardour in their breasts, and incline

them to forward it to the utmost of their power. If a sufficient sum were raised to meet the first expenses, those of a permanent nature must be provided for by annual subscriptions, by congregational collections, and by donations and testamentary bequests. These would be applied either to the general purposes of the body, or to such specific objects as may be most agreeable to the wishes of the donor. If the Dissenters were to hold out a rational prospect of improvement, by placing their affairs upon a more solid and respectable footing, it cannot be doubted, that they would receive large accessions to their body, and that the means of providing for its support would be thereby materially increased.

I have now gone through what I intended upon this subject, without entering into minute details, which are of secondary consideration. By many, perhaps, it will be reckoned an Utopian scheme; whilst others, who may feel disposed to admit its plausibility, will doubt how far the temper of the times is such as to render it practicable. That it will have to encounter strong prejudices, I know enough of the world to expect; and the only hope I can indulge is, that it may work its way to the understandings of the wise and prudent, who, if they form only the minority, are nevertheless the guides and directors of public opinion. Fully persuaded as I am of its utility, I cannot but desire its success; but, in whatever way it may be received, I shall be satisfied in having discharged my conscience upon a point in which I have long taken a lively interest. The cause of Nonconformity, as maintained by our ancestors, I believe to have been that of truth and piety, and regret that it should have given way to a less wholesome system; the bad effects of which are matters of daily experience. A return to the better paths which they marked out for us, will be the most likely means to retrieve our circumstances; and, if we can bring their schemes to greater perfection than they were allowed to do, through the perversity of the times, we shall have the honour of entering into their labours, and the greater felicity of reaping a kinder reward.

Since the foregoing pages were written, a circumstance has occurred, to fortify, in the judgment of the author, all his speculations upon the inadequacy of the Independent discipline. Before the measures for an union could be matured by those who had announced it as in progress, a schism is threatened in the body; and some persons at a distance, in full confidence of their superior powers, have come forward to reap the laurels that should grace the brows of the first originators. It may be fairly said by every well-wisher to the object, "Surely an enemy hath done this;" for, if any one thing be calculated to ruin it more than another, it is to precipitate the business, by an act so utterly devoid of human prudence.

It will be seen readily, that I here allude to the Dorsetshire manifesto, of which, it seems, fifteen hundred copies have been put into circulation. This address I have seen, together with the remarks upon it, in "The Congregational Magazine," and an angry rejoinder in "The World" newspaper. From the complexion of the last of these productions, it might be inferred by a visitor from some distant region, that charity, "which suffereth long, and is kind," and humility, with which Christians are exhorted to clothe themselves, form no part of the religion of a Congregational Dissenter. Far be it from me to insinuate, that such is actually the case; but the natural bearing of the article referred to, would admit of the construction, without any inordinate violence to language. What hands may have been employed in the composition of these papers, I do not profess to know; but, from the hostility avowed in one of them, to say nothing of its ill-timed boasting, it is not difficult to foresee the result. The strictures in the foregoing pages will exonerate me from being in league with either of the parties; but I am at no loss to discover where the spirit of Christianity has been displayed to the most advantage.

With regard to the Dorsetshire address, the materials of which it is composed are as inefficient, for any practical purpose, as the suggestions of the provisional committee. Like its precursor, it is wholly destitute of any character of adhesiveness, and alike barren of dissenting objects. If either of them had any chance of being brought to a successful conclu-

sion, which I look upon to be about as improbable as the general adoption of my own scheme, it would have the mischievous effect of confirming and extending the religious quackery that is so offensive to all sober-minded Christians, and has been so long the bane of the dissenting interest. If Dissenters are to be recognized as a distinct body in the religious world, they must come out from the general herd of propagandists, and shew some concern for the value of their principles, by a more orderly dealing with religion. Then, and not till then, can they expect to hold them up to the respectful attention of society.

The premature emanation from Dorsetshire can have no other effect than to embarrass the hands of those who were already engaged in a similar undertaking. It is true, the field was open to any adventurer who might choose to occupy it; but the wisdom of a county association, in embarking upon a scheme that was already under the consideration of a metropolitan committee, whose means for effecting it must have been much more ample, cannot be highly applauded. Whatever value may attach to some of the names upon the Dorsetshire paper, and there are some of them that I could have wished to see reserved for a more fitting occasion, yet we must not be led away by names; for it is rather to the merits of an undertaking that we must direct our attention, than to the authority by which it is recommended. It is not in an obscure country town, nor from the labours of a county association, composed as such bodies now are, that we are to look for the *nucleus* of an union upon any grand and authoritative scale. As well might we expect to see a Bank of England established in the Isle of Purbeck, or a national society for literature in one of the Hebrides. If the Dissenters are ever to be incorporated, so as to form one firm and compacted body, London must be its focus,—the source of its proceedings, and the centre of its business. This may not be flattering to the fancied importance of those who move within the contracted sphere of a country town; but if they have the good of the cause at heart, they must be satisfied to sink themselves in behalf of the common benefit. When men are too eager for distinction, they often run themselves out of breath, not only to their own confusion, which is of small

importance, but to the ruin of their associates. This is not the first time that a good cause has been marred by ambition; nor is the story of Phaeton a solitary instance of the fate that awaits an unskilful driver.

There is now an exuberance of zeal, bordering upon fanaticism, in what is termed the religious world. It exists, in a greater or less degree, amongst all denominations of Christians, producing the wildest speculations and the most extravagant projects; but its worst fruits are its inroads upon those kindly affections, which it is the object of Christianity to unfold and enforce. From the signs of the times, we might be led to conclude that we are thrown upon the latter ages of the world, when men will give heed to all manner of signs and lying wonders, to the neglect of all that is sober in religion, and to the subversion of that faith which worketh by love. Whatever may be the issue of these things, the duty of Christians is plainly marked out for them in the Word of God, to which they will do well to take heed; and also to "watch and pray, lest they enter into temptation."

To those who are really Dissenters, and, as such, are concerned for the prosperity of their body, I wish I could hold out the prospect of a better state of things than they now witness. This, however, is not to be looked for without a greater union of heart and affection, the best precursor of any civil arrangement for the consolidation of their interests. The first, no less than the last, must be sought by rational methods, rather than by fanciful impulses; for, if they neglect the one, the other will, I fear, be of little avail. In attempting to retrieve their affairs, their greatest danger must be expected to arise from the hasty and indiscreet zeal of injudicious friends, who will drive them on to action before their plans are sufficiently matured. Let them beware of splitting upon this rock; or they will rear a fabric with the certain prospect of witnessing its overthrow. Patient consideration and wise forethought are as essential in the formation of plans, as prudence, resolution, and activity, in their execution. The strong prejudices and discordant passions that will be opposed to an amicable arrangement, can be counteracted only by time and perseverance, with the assistance of good sense and skill in the management. If the

scheme be laid well,—if it be founded in wisdom and conducted with prudence, there may still be hope of a successful termination, although, in the first instance, it would be in vain to expect a widely-extended co-operation. This will follow in due time, until, by the blessing of God, pure and undefiled religion shall overspread the land.

Extremes in religion, into which men are so prone to fall, have been long working their way in this country. Whilst that of the upper and learned classes, in general, may be designated as a sort of Pantheism, the religion of the lower orders is no better than an implicit faith, and a wild enthusiasm. If the Dissenters are wise, they will now strike the balance, by exhibiting it in a more rational dress, and by such an orderly administration of their affairs, as shall recommend their cause to the pious and intelligent of all classes. Should they neglect the present opportunity, it is not improbable that a new order of Dissenters may spring up, within the bosom of the Establishment, to rescue the cause of scriptural religion out of their hands. Already, there is a considerable body, both clergy and laity, who are dissatisfied with her institutions, and anxious for a further reformation, which cannot be withheld much longer. Amongst them, many are desirous of seeing the Church divested of her political connexions, and of reducing Episcopacy to a nearer affinity with the primitive standard; and these, if Dissenters do not bestir themselves, will form the rallying point for the sounder portion of the community. The increasing intelligence that is now at work in society, cannot but bring about an amended state of things; and, if Dissenters are the only people who will not profit by it, they must consent to be left in the back ground of improvement, and to be treated accordingly. That they may have the wisdom to see their right path, and the prudence to walk in it, is the sincere wish of the author.

A

LETTER,

ADDRESSED TO THE AUTHOR OF

“REMARKS UPON THE PRESENT STATE OF THE
DISSENTING INTEREST, WITH HINTS FOR
ITS IMPROVEMENT BY MEANS OF A
CONSOLIDATED UNION.”

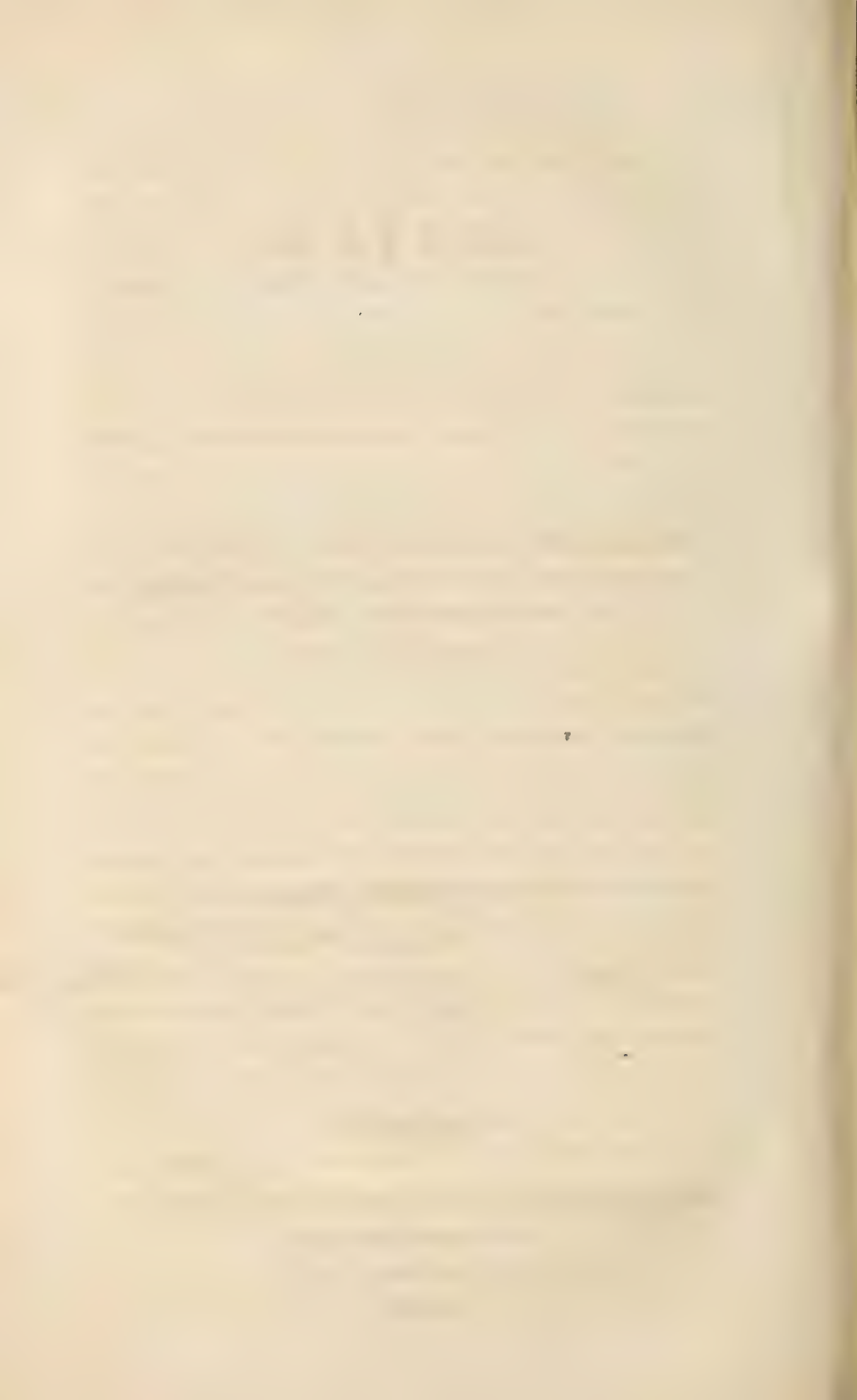
BY INVESTIGATOR.

*Neale (Agnostos Author of
Thoughts on Antinomianism — Baptism &c*

LONDON:

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24, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1831.



A L E T T E R,

8c. 8c.

DEAR SIR,

A FRIEND having put into my hands your “Remarks upon the Present State of the Dissenting Interest,” &c., I take the liberty of submitting to your candid attention the following observations which occurred to my mind, on the perusal of it.

My attention has of late been particularly turned to the subject, from what you justly designate “a sensible little treatise upon church-government, by Joseph Turnbull, B.A.,” the author having kindly presented me with a copy of the work, begging the favour of my thoughts upon it, as he was about to print a second edition. I accordingly complied with his request, and take the liberty of inserting, at the close, a copy of my answer. As there is nothing in that answer of a private nature, I cannot charge myself with acting improperly in giving publicity to it.

You will perceive that the ideas therein suggested correspond in many particulars with what you have stated in your “Remarks;” especially when you say, (page 36,) “I am quite of Dr. Campbell’s mind, that no form of ecclesiastical polity now in being has any legitimate claim to a divine right.” I would go a step farther, and add—least of all that of the Independents. And for this plain reason—the primitive churches were constructed with a special view to the extension of the kingdom of Christ. Hence the rapid

spread of the gospel, not only during the lives of the apostles, but after their decease. Though the apostles, *as such*, left no successors—none who like them received their commission directly from Christ himself, attested, not only by the exercise of extraordinary gifts, but by the power of conferring those gifts on others—yet, as it was evidently the design of God that the work begun by the apostles should be carried forward, as it actually was, with great success, at a subsequent period, there must be some endued with powers adapted to the accomplishment of that object. Such seems to have been the office of evangelists, mentioned (Eph. iv. 11.) after that of apostles, and before pastors and teachers. Timothy and Titus appear to be of this description. The epistles addressed to them by the apostle Paul, contain many suggestions, which, to an unbiassed mind, may throw considerable light on the subject. In that to Titus, the apostle says, (chap. i. 5,) “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.” In verse 6, immediately following, the apostle points out the qualifications requisite for such characters, “If any be blameless,” &c. and says, (verse 7,) “For a bishop must be blameless,” &c. Thus it clearly appears, that it was to the specific office of bishops, that these elders were to be ordained by Titus, himself an elder.

Now, who is it, not previously wedded to a particular system by party interest, habits, or connexions, but must instantly see, that there were different orders of ministers, some claiming a superiority, which was

cheerfully conceded by others; and that such an order of things was very conducive, if not absolutely essential, to the propagation of Christianity, according to our Lord's command. Here is, surely, no trace of that levelling principle, which is the very cornerstone of Independency.

We proceed to observe what the apostle says concerning the office of bishops and deacons, in his first epistle to Timothy, (chap. iii. 1—13.) “This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; one that RULETH well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to RULE his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.

“Likewise must the deacons be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre, holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave; not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, RULING their children, and their own houses, well; for they that

have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Here are two distinct classes of office-bearers set before us, with the qualifications requisite for the discharge of their respective duties. It is generally agreed, that by bishop, or *overseer*, (as the word literally signifies,) we are to understand the office of pastor, or shepherd, whose business it is, to teach and to rule the flock committed to his care, both ideas being included, but especially the latter; for even civil governors are called pastors and shepherds by the prophet Jeremiah, (chap. xii. 10. and xxv. 34.) and the apostle says, (1 Tim. v. 17.) "Let the elders that RULE well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. In this third chapter also he speaks of them under this character, intimating that, by RULING well their own house, they would be better qualified to bear the office of RULER in the church of God.

Hence, also, the apostle Peter says, in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, at the beginning, "The elders that are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that is to be revealed: Feed the flock of God, which is among you, *taking the oversight* thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock; and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Mr. Scott, in his Commentary, observes, that the words rendered *taking the oversight* literally signify *performing the episcopal office* ; and must be allowed to be a decisive evidence, that no express distinction was established between bishops and presbyters, when the apostle wrote this epistle. Dr. Doddridge, also, considers the term as expressly denoting *the episcopal office*, that is, the office of bishop, or pastor, which they were called to discharge.

We come now to the office of deacons. This has generally been considered, by Independents, as belonging exclusively to secular affairs, and that those by whom it is sustained have no more to do with the spiritual concerns of the church than any of its private members. Hence, in sermons, preached and published, on occasion of the appointment of deacons, they are told that their business is to serve tables—the table of the Lord, the table of the minister, and the table of the poor—beyond which they have no authority whatever. But if we impartially examine what the apostle explicitly states in the chapter more immediately under consideration, we may be led to form a different conclusion.

In the first place, we cannot fail to observe a striking resemblance between the office of bishop and that of deacon, in the qualities required in each. In several instances the very same expressions are employed ; such as—blameless—the husband of one wife—not given to wine—not greedy of filthy lucre. Again, they are both spoken of as *ruling* : another blow at the system of equality ! The greater probability is, that the deacons, appointed by the apostles,

were associates to the bishops, in the work of preaching as well as in distributing the bounty of the church. And this corresponds with the facts recorded respecting those who were set apart to this office by the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

Of two of these deacons we are particularly told, not only that they preached, but that their preaching was attended with the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Of Stephen it is said, that his enemies "were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake." This drew down upon him a torrent of persecution, which terminated in his receiving the crown of martyrdom.

In the following chapter, we have an account of Philip, another of the deacons, that he "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them." We afterwards find him in the desert that lay between Jerusalem and Gaza, where he met with "a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority, under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians; who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem to worship." On his way home, as he was sitting in his chariot, reading a remarkable passage in the prophecy of Isaiah, Philip, by divine direction, joined himself to the chariot, and "began at the same scripture, and preached to him Jesus." It pleased God to give testimony to the word of his grace, in so much that the eunuch believed, was baptized, and "went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus, and, passing through, he preached in all the cities, till he came to Cesarea."

We are confirmed in this view of the subject, by

what is said at the close of the description that is given us of the deacon's office, as quoted above. "For they that have used the office of a deacon well, purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." Dr. Doddridge and Mr. Scott, the one an Independent, the other a Churchman, when commenting on this passage, in connexion with the preceding context, concur in the opinion, that the deacons in primitive times were occasional preachers, and that pastors, or evangelists, were often chosen from among them.

If we admit that deacons were, at that period, engaged in the work of public instruction, as well as bishops, though in a somewhat inferior capacity, it will throw considerable light on the passage we have just cited, and give it a force and emphasis which cannot otherwise attach to it. Being recognized as public characters, they might be called to profess their faith in Christ before governors and kings; and if they undauntedly adhered to that profession, they would "purchase to themselves a good degree." They would prove themselves well qualified to take a superior office in the ministry, in case of the removal of the bishop by death, or the sword of persecution. In this case, a deacon would stand in the same relation to a bishop, as a lieutenant does to the general in an army, to the colonel in a regiment, or to the captain of a company, ready to take the command at the removal of his superior officer. And it may be observed, that the Church of England, in conformity, as it should seem, with ancient usage, ordains her ministers, first in deacon's, and then in priest's orders.

The Independent plan may, in a good degree, answer the purpose of communicating instruction and edification to those who are born, so to speak, in the pale of its inclosure, or who come within the sphere of its influence ; but if an attempt is to be made to spread the gospel in the regions beyond them, whether more or less remote, the system of which they are so tenacious must be abandoned, and a principle of a totally different description be adopted.

To instance in the London Missionary Society. This Society, it is well known, is conducted by Independents, but not upon Independent principles ; for *that*, no Missionary Society is, or can be. They send out ministers, who are amenable to them, subject to their control, and removable at their pleasure. These, surely, are not Independent ministers ! Let us look at the situation to which Dr. Philip has been appointed by the Society. It is for the purpose of *taking the oversight*, which Doddridge and Scott agree in referring to the *episcopal office*. And let it be borne in mind, that this oversight is not that of a pastor over a single congregation, to which Peter evidently alludes, but that of a very extensive district.

Here, then, we have Dr. Philip, himself a minister under the Missionary Society, with ministers under him, and subject to his control, in respect of their destination, and their conduct ; insomuch that he might adopt the language of the centurion, (Matt. viii. 9. " I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me ; and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh." So much for equality !

We have observed above, that the apostles, *as such*, left no successors ; but let it be remembered, that they sustained another character, even that of missionaries ; in which character they certainly had successors ; for the rapid spread of the gospel, during the first ages of Christianity, was effected, not, as in the present day, by missionary societies, but by individual exertions. It was the pleasure of God at that period, to raise up men, called, and endowed by him with eminent piety, zeal, and talents, which qualified them for the purpose of calling sinners, forming churches, ordaining suitable ministers, and *taking the oversight* of their affairs ; or, in other words, exercising the episcopal office, with the same kind of authority which is now vested in voluntary associations.

It should seem, then, after all, that episcopacy bids much fairer to have been the original form of church-government than Independency ; and well would it have been for the cause of Christianity, if such a system had continued to prevail in its primitive simplicity and spirituality ; but, unhappily, the office, in process of time, fell into the hands of men, who valued it more for the dignity attached to it, than for the means of usefulness it afforded ; thus making it the instrument of gratifying worldly ambition, and obtaining secular advantage ; till moderate episcopacy was raised to diocesan prelacy ; the prelacy was advanced to the patriarchate ; and, at length, terminated in the popedom—in every one of these forms, but especially in the latter, laying exclusive claim to divine authority.

Mr. Scott, in his Commentary, on 1 Tim. v. 22., “Lay hands suddenly on no man,” thus expresses himself, “It is manifest that Timothy is here and elsewhere supposed to possess great authority in the Ephesian church, both in superintending the elders already ordained, and in ordaining others, &c. It is allowed that he was an extraordinary person, especially appointed by the apostle to this service; but there is no proof that he conferred miraculous powers by the imposition of his hands, as the apostles did. We can by no means infer the divine right of episcopacy, (especially of modern episcopacy,) from the authority exercised by Timothy, Titus, and probably other evangelists: yet, it is likely, that it was soon found expedient, and conducive to peace, to have some stated presiding inspector, of approved wisdom and piety, who might superintend the pastors and affairs of a few neighbouring churches, as a sort of moderator and censor; and be particularly attended to in the appointment of church officers; hence a kind of moderate episcopacy was very early, perhaps even while some of the apostles lived, generally prevalent in the church. And after all the abuses, usurpations, controversies, and prejudices, that have since taken place, perhaps the time will ere long arrive, when experience will convince godly men of a different persuasion, that something of this kind, properly conferred, limited, and exercised, would prove a proper remedy to those multiplied divisions, which so weaken and disgrace many religious societies, that in doctrine, worship, and practice are in all other respects unexceptionable.

“This, at least, is the writer’s judgment on this subject, collected chiefly, in a course of years, from the study of the scriptures, and observation of facts; and as he does not think any species of external church-government to be exclusively of divine authority; as he is little connected with any kind, and little interested in the determination of such controversies; so he hopes that he impartially desires that form to be adopted, and to prevail, which may most tend to the peace and purity of the church.”

It seems, then, very clear, that Mr. Scott “did not think any species of external church-government as exclusively of divine authority.” I am happy to add to his decisive testimony on this subject, that of an author, pre-eminently distinguished for discriminating judgment, sound reasoning, perspicuity, and force of expression. I mean, the late Andrew Fuller. He belonged, as it is well known, to a denomination that has urged this claim to divine authority more strenuously, and enforced it more rigorously, than any other sect whatever. It is against the ultras of his own sect that he has taken up his pen.

I refer to his “*Strictures on Sandemanianism, in Twelve Letters to a Friend,*” published in the year 1810. In the tenth letter, “*On Church Government and Discipline,*” he says, (page 194,) “The question is, On what principles did the apostles proceed in forming and organizing Christian churches—*positive*, or *moral*? If the former, they must have been furnished with an exact model or pattern, like that which was given to Moses in the mount, and have done all things according to it; but if the latter, they would

only be furnished with general principles, comprehending, but not specifying, a great variety of particulars."

In the following page, he adds, "Doubtless the apostles acted under divine direction; but in things of a moral nature, that direction consisted not in providing them with a model or pattern, in the manner of that given to Moses, but in furnishing them with general principles, and enduing them with holy wisdom to apply them as occasions required."

In page 200, he observes, "It may serve to illustrate and simplify the subject, if we compare the conduct of the apostles with that of a company of *missionaries* in our own times. What indeed was an *apostle*, but an inspired missionary? Allowing only for ordinary Christian missionaries being uninspired, we shall see in their history all the leading characteristics of apostolic practice."

In the next page, he adds, "Again, the first missionaries to a heathen country could not be chosen by those to whom they were sent, but by him or them who sent them; nor would their influence be confined to a single congregation, but, by a kind of parental authority, would extend to all the societies that might be raised by means of their labours. It would be different with succeeding pastors, who might be raised up from among the converts; they would, of course, be chosen by their brethren, and their authority be confined to those who elected them."

A little further on, he thus proceeds, "Again, The first missionaries to a heathen country would be employed in the *planting* of churches, wherever proper

materials were found for the purpose; and if the work so increased upon their hands as to be too much for them, they would depute others whom God should gift and qualify, *like-minded* with themselves, to assist them in it."

In page 204, he says, "The sum is, that church-government and discipline are not a body of ceremonies; but a few general principles, sufficient for all practical purposes, but not sufficient to satisfy those who in New Testament directions expect to find an Old Testament ritual.

"It is not difficult to perceive the wisdom of God in thus varying the two dispensations. The Jewish church was an army of soldiers, who had to go through a variety of forms in learning their discipline; the Christian church is an army going forth to battle. The members of the first were taught punctilious obedience, and led with great formality through a variety of religious evolutions; but those of the last (though they also must keep their ranks, and act in obedience to command, whenever it is given, yet) are not required to be so attentive to the mechanical as to the mental, not so much to the minute observation of forms, as to the spirit and design of them. The order of the one would almost seem to be appointed for order's sake; but in that of the other, the utility of every thing is apparent. The obedience of the former was that of children; the latter, of sons arrived at mature age."

O how pleasing it is to see men of such pre-eminent talents and piety, who shone like stars of the first magnitude, in the spheres in which they moved,

rising above those contracted views and bigoted feelings, which are the native growth of the sects to which they respectively belonged!

I concur with your statement respecting the authority exercised by the bishops or pastors of the primitive church, when you say, "That they had some power, as its executive officers, may be fairly conjectured, as well from the terms employed to designate their office, as from the injunctions of the apostle. See Heb. xiii. 7, 17, 24. From these, and other passages, I infer, that the bishops of those days had more power than the Independents concede to their ministers."

A little further on, you add, "For besides its bishops, each church had its elders and deacons; both of them invested sometimes with the office of teachers, although the chief business of the latter seems to have been of a temporal nature."

The following observation also I cordially approve. "These remarks upon some of the earliest usages of the Christian church might be corroborated by a reference to the writings of the apostles and their immediate successors; but as I do not intend this for a treatise upon the subject, such citations would be inconsistent with the required brevity. My design is merely to state my own impression, in justification of a former remark, that no existing form of church-government has any claim to the distinction of a divine right." (See pages 38—40.)

Before proceeding any farther, I would just ask, How can the apostolic injunction, (Heb. xiii. 17.) "Obey them that have the rule over you," be practi-

cally regarded in those churches, which are formed on the Independent plan of a pure democracy, like the republic of ants, "having no guide, overseer, or ruler?" (Prov. vi. 7.) Now, if this duty, enjoined on the primitive churches, is equally binding on us, and Independent churches are constructed on a plan which renders the performance of this duty absolutely impossible in their connexion, it is as clear as any self-evident proposition can be, that Independent churches are not formed on the apostolic plan.

You justly observe, in the introduction to the subject of your pamphlet, "It must be apparent to every one who is acquainted with the history and principles of nonconformity, that the features of dissent, as exhibited in the present day, wear a very different appearance to those which they presented formerly." In this I entirely acquiesce ; and also in the instances to which you refer, to prove the justness of your allegation ; particularly concerning the posture of prayer.

On this subject you say, (page 48,) "I think Dissenters have erred greatly. They will often stand to sing, but sit down as soon as the minister begins to address the Almighty, than which nothing can be more irreverent." O how different from the usage of our pious ancestors ! When they approached the throne of the heavenly grace, and did, by the mouth of their minister, "take upon them to speak unto the Lord," they stood up, from the commencement to the close of the solemn service ; and when "speaking to themselves and to one another, in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in their heart to the Lord," they uniformly sat down, as

children of the same family, feeling themselves at home, with their brethren and sisters, in their Father's house, while hearing his word, celebrating his praise, and delightfully anticipating the period, when they should "sit down in the kingdom of God," and go no more out.

This pleasing aspect of a worshipping assembly seems to have suggested to the mind of Dr. Watts those beautiful lines, with which he begins one of his divine songs for children :—

“ Lord, how delightful 'tis to see
A whole assembly worship thee !
At once they sing, at once they pray,
They hear of heaven, and learn the way.”

But this uniformity in worship, so delightful to the pious beholder, has been completely destroyed, where the practice complained of has obtained admittance, and a scene adapted to make impressions of an opposite description, been presented to our view.

We have sometimes thought, Were our forefathers asked what they would say, on seeing a large proportion of the congregation sitting down, while professedly worshipping at the footstool of their Maker, and being told that they were in the constant habit of so doing—after strongly reprobating such a mode of proceeding, they would probably reply in language similar to that of the great apostle of the gentiles, when correcting certain disorders that had crept into the church at Corinth, “ We had no such custom, nor had any of the churches in our connexion.” Such is the consequence of introducing the practice of standing to sing ; for it will generally be found, that

those who stand to sing will sit to pray, which is a complete “turning of things upside down.”

Having thus briefly noticed the principal points in which I cordially agree with you, I venture to touch upon some wherein I am constrained to differ. And here I must take leave to observe, that the contempt which you have repeatedly expressed for the poor and illiterate of the flock of Christ, I consider as highly objectionable. I should be very sorry to apply to you the language which the psalmist addresses to the wicked, (Psa. xiv. 6,) “You have shamed the counsel of the poor.” But when you are pleased to designate such by the opprobrious epithets of the *vulgar*, *mobs*, *mob* government, and the *scum of society*, you certainly appear to speak of the Lord’s people, who, in every age of the world, have been chiefly composed of this class, (see *Zeph.* iii. 12,) in much the same manner as they were doubtless spoken of by those against whom the charge is brought. At any rate, we must say that, in so speaking, you “offend against the generation of God’s children.” (See James ii. 1—9.)

Indeed, you seem to me far more concerned to advance the respectability of Dissenters, than to promote their piety. This is very evident from the contemptuous manner in which you speak of experiences. Now, if a real experience of the power of divine truth on the heart (so far as it can be ascertained) is not to be considered as requisite to church-membership, you form such an amalgamation of the church and the world, as furnishes one of the grounds on which we separate from the Establishment, being that which has proved, in every age, most injurious

to the interests of real religion. You must surely have forgotten, that the primitive churches were composed of *saints*, and *brethren in Christ* ; in which characters they are uniformly addressed by the apostles.

You say, however, in page 22, “ I shall be greatly misunderstood, if it should be thought that, in the foregoing remarks, I design to pour any contempt upon humble piety. In the register of heaven, the souls of the poor may occupy as conspicuous a place as those of the rich, the redemption of the one being as precious as that of the other. Insensible to those adventitious distinctions which give to one man a pre-eminence over another, the Supreme Judge of all is no respecter of persons ; and, as in every nation, so in every possible condition of human existence, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, shall be accepted by him.

“ If the gospel is preached most generally to the poor, it is because they are usually most disposed to welcome it with a willing ear ; and if it comes home to them with power, producing the fruits of faith in a life of godliness and honesty, they will always claim and receive from the true follower of Christ, in whatever station he may be placed, that respect and esteem which their worth demands. Ignorance and poverty are no crimes, at least in the unfortunate subjects of them ; for it is the business of society to correct the one, and remove the other.”

Surely, my dear sir, if you had been deeply imbued with these sentiments when you began your treatise, it would have restrained that torrent of contempt and abuse, which you have thought proper to pour on those very characters in the preceding pages.

In page 7, you observe, "There is now a prevalent idea in different parts of the country, that something ought to be done, and will be undertaken forthwith, to give greater consistency at least to the loose materials that compose the most considerable section of the dissenting body. Whether the projected union is to be instrumental in promoting a reformation of discipline, or to embrace any objects of a purely dissenting character, does not appear from the printed paper of the provisional committee. A cursory glance at this document is sufficient to force the conviction that any further proceedings upon it will be a *nothing-doing* business,—as futile in its purposes, as these are irrelevant to the real wants of the case."

In page 8, you say, "A union formed upon such insufficient motives, would, I conceive, be as useless, as I fear it is hopeless. I am old enough to remember an attempt of the like kind, several years ago, by some of the parties to this; and also to witness its complete failure." A little lower down in the same page, you speak of "a coalition of dissenters," and say, "This, to be at all useful, should embrace objects peculiarly their own, calculated to improve their condition, and to advance the cause of non-conformity, as the purest mode of dispensing religion." But how could you possibly think of "a coalition of dissenters," the mass of whom you had represented but just before in such a way as to give one the idea of a body, whose surface was overspread with a disease, that defaced its beauty, impaired its vigour, and destroyed its usefulness: insomuch that "the more regular dissenters" were in great danger of having

their constitution undermined by coming into too close a contact with it.

In page 9, you proceed to say, "From the complexion of what has transpired upon the subject, it appears that the proposed union is intended to be confined to *congregational* churches. To this" you add, "I have very serious objections, upon the score of utility as well as of practicability; and feel persuaded, that, if persevered in, the whole scheme will fall to the ground."

In page 11, you begin unfolding "the evils resulting from Independency," which you exhibit in six distinct particulars. The discussion of these occupies a considerable number of pages; after toiling through which, we come at length to the CONSOLIDATED UNION; which you recommend in your title-page as the means of improving the dissenting interest.

And now we have the grand specific, which is to effect a complete cure of that virulent epidemical disease, which has made such dreadful havoc in the constitution of the dissenting body. And what is this remedy, after all, that is to work such wonders? Hear it, gentle readers! It is neither more nor less than a full dose of presbyterianism! Presbyterianism! say you. O no: we can never swallow that. There was a time when they attempted to cram it down our throats, but we were soon sick of it, it would not stay upon our stomachs; so we threw it up, with a determination, that, come what would, we would never take that medicine again.

But to be serious. With respect to the consregational union, the question has been asked again and

again, but has never yet been satisfactorily answered, What legitimate object is to be obtained by the proposed union, but might as well, if not much better, have been accomplished without it? As they reject the idea of making it a court of appeal, or exercising any authority whatever, their whole business must be confined to that of obtaining and communicating information and advice. For this purpose they must employ a corresponding secretary, with a suitable remuneration. Be it so. Now I would ask, as there is already a board of independent ministers, who have their regular meetings for conducting the affairs of that denomination, might not the appointment of a corresponding secretary completely answer the purpose, without that bustle and parade with which this is introduced to public notice?

The array of LL.D. and D.D.'s, with a host of reverends, like a flourish of trumpets, exciting public attention to the plan which is to follow, is just what an apostle would call "making a fair show in the flesh." And should the scheme fail, as it probably will, if not in its existence, at least in its expected results, it will doubtless bring to recollection that line of a celebrated Latin poet, so often quoted in reference to Utopian projects:—

Parturiunt montes, nascitur ridiculus mus.

For some will say with smiles, and some with scorn,
 "A mountain labours, and a mouse is born."

Some future historian, referring to this projected union, may probably observe, It was conceived in folly, brought forth in pride, and expired in ignominy. (See Prov. xi. 2.)

In a passage already quoted from page 7 in your book, you very properly speak of the Independents as a *section* of the dissenting body. But it is not in this way that they exhibit themselves. To any one not better informed, it would appear, from a perusal of their document, as if they were the only dissenters in existence. As for the Baptists, they are passed over in total silence, as not worthy to be named; no, not when the object is to assist in maintaining and enlarging the civil rights of Protestant Dissenters, in which they doubtless feel as deep an interest as their brethren, from whom they differ *only* on the subject of baptism; for such as are acquainted with the dissenting body, know full well, that there are not only many classes of Dissenters, but that there are two distinct classes of Independents, or Congregationalists,—Baptists and Pede-Baptists—the former of whom pay a much more *practical* regard to the principles of Independency than the latter.

But what I consider as most of all objectionable in the plan, is the *sectarian* spirit that pervades the whole. The proposed union is entitled, *Congregational* union—It is to be composed of *Congregational* churches and ministers—in connexion with the *Congregational* board. The place where the meeting was held for the purpose of forming the union (where its details were amply discussed, and the whole, as they appear before the public, agreed to *nem. con.*) was the *Congregational* library—and the channel, through which all this is to be communicated to the public, is the *Congregational* magazine. This speaking-trumpet, with a loud sounding voice, is to spread far and wide,

yea, “throughout the world,” the high praises of the *Congregational* denomination.

It may be asserted, without fear of contradiction, that wherever we see a *sectarian* spirit, there exists, and generally in equal proportion, a spirit of *self-exaltation*. Never was this maxim more fully verified than in the case before us; in proof of which we need only refer to the object proposed in No. 5. They have, indeed, a precedent for such a mode of proceeding; and we would earnestly entreat them to consider the nature of that precedent, and the result that followed. It will be found in 2 Sam. xxiv. and 1 Chron. xxi.

But this is not the only precedent. They will find another in the conduct of Hezekiah, as recorded in 2 Kings xx. 12—18. 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 26. and Isa. xxxix. It will be well for those who take the lead in the business of this union, should they persist in their attempt to carry the object into effect, to consider how far in *their* correspondence—while displaying their wealth and wisdom, their numbers and respectability, “throughout the kingdom and the world at large”—they are imitating the conduct of Hezekiah in *his* correspondence with the ambassadors of the king of Babylon.

When drawing towards the close of your book, you say, (page 67,) “To those who are really Dissenters, and, as such, are concerned for the prosperity of their body, I wish I could hold out the prospect of a better state of things than they now witness. This, however, is not to be looked for, without a greater union of heart and affection, the best precursor of

any civil arrangement for the consolidation of their interests."

In page 68, you add, "Should they neglect the present opportunity, it is not improbable that a new order of Dissenters may spring up within the bosom of the Establishment, to rescue the cause of scriptural religion out of their hands. Already there is a considerable body, both clergy and laity, who are dissatisfied with her institutions, and anxious for a further reformation, which cannot be delayed much longer. Amongst them, many are desirous of seeing the church divested of her political connexions, and of reducing episcopacy to a nearer affinity with the primitive standard; and these, if Dissenters do not bestir themselves, will form the rallying point for the sounder portion of the community. The increasing intelligence that is now at work in society, cannot but bring about an amended state of things; and if Dissenters are the only people who will not profit by it, they must consent to be left in the back ground of improvement, and to be treated accordingly."

Now I must confess, that I should very much like to see "a new order of Dissenters spring up out of the bosom of the church," to rescue scriptural religion out of the hands of sectarians, whether Independents or Baptists, and form not a congregational union, nor a consolidated union, but a CHRISTIAN UNION; wherein all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity might combine their energies to promote his cause, and advance his kingdom and interest in the world, in opposition to the prince of darkness, the

spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

Be that bigotry far from our breast,
Which would Christian from Christian divide,
Which by blind party zeal is caress'd—
The offspring of folly and pride.

Names, parties, and sects disappear,
With their separate interests and laws;
No name but of CHRIST would we hear,
No interest but that of his cause.

Having thus freely communicated my sentiments on the subject under discussion, I beg leave to subscribe myself,

Dear Sir,

Yours respectfully,

INVESTIGATOR.

COPY OF A LETTER ADDRESSED TO
REV. JOSEPH TURNBULL.

(REFERRED TO IN PAGE 3.)

DEAR SIR,

As you are pleased to request that I would fully communicate my sentiments on the statements contained in your book, I am happy to say, after having perused it more than once with care and attention, that I find much in it, of which I cordially approve. Your historical researches have thrown considerable light on the subject, and are well worthy the attention of the religious public ; notwithstanding which, I concur in opinion with "the acute and impartial Campbell," in respect of the different Christian sects, when he says, "I have not found one of all that I have examined, which can be said perfectly to coincide with the model of the apostolical church."

This, you say, is "a doctrine pregnant with the most injurious consequences;" and you add, "Surely the Redeemer, after shedding his blood for the church, has not abandoned it to every wind of doctrine or caprice! Surely the important concern of regulating the worship and the manners of Christians, is not left to chance! We cannot suppose the Redeemer indifferent whether his kingdom be worldly or spiritual, corrupt or pure."

In reply to this, I would say, Surely, dear sir, you forget the nature of the present dispensation, and its evident design, which is not, like the former, to give laws, to which an exact obedience must be paid, under the severest penalties; but to establish principles, which, in their operation, according to the degree in which the mind is brought under their influence, will do more to preserve both individuals and societies from being carried about with every wind of doctrine, or embracing that which is carnal, worldly, and impure, than any particular forms of ecclesiastical polity which the various sects have thought proper to adopt, and for which some have so fiercely contended. (See Eph. iv. 11—16.)

In the admission of members, I agree with you, that some churches may be too rigid; but I am far from thinking, that “it were better to be deceived ten times by the profession of candidates, than to run the hazard of excluding one sincere soul.” I am well persuaded, that the opposite error is far more common, and infinitely more fatal. I would rather say to one, who did not give decided evidence of a change of heart, Wait a little longer—when the plant is farther advanced, we shall be better able to judge of the seed from which it springs.

You are certainly in error when you say, that “by the first disciples a matter was determined by the *majority* of suffrages, as in the choice of Matthias to fill up the place of Judas Iscariot.” Now, you will find, by turning to Acts i. 23—26, that that matter was determined by lot, and neither by vote or ballot. We read of no majorities in the New Testament.

The Quakers never adopt that unscriptural mode of proceeding.

On "the authority of elders," I am of opinion, with you, that the term elder is generic ; and that of pastor, or bishop, specific. The late Mr. Dore, of Maze Pond, was of the same sentiment. We are in the habit of considering the office of pastor, and that of bishop, or teacher, as identical ; but in the New Testament they are clearly distinguished from each other ; the office of pastor referring rather to that of ruler, though both offices might be exercised by the same person. Hence we read, (Eph. iv. 11.) of pastors *and* teachers ; and in Rom. xii. 7, 8, there is distinct mention made of him that *teacheth*, and of him that *ruleth*.

See also 1 Tim. v. 17 ; "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine." Also, Heb. xiii. 17 ; "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief."

It has been supposed that, because the epistle to the Philippians is addressed to all the saints at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons, therefore this is to be considered as the complete model, upon which all the churches were formed, and that there were no officers in any of them, but those that are here designated.

Now, I conceive this to be a very erroneous idea : first, because this is the only epistle so addressed ; and, secondly, because in Rom. xii. and 1 Cor. xii.

a great variety of offices and officers are particularly mentioned, with appropriate exhortations to each. Why, then, it may be asked, were bishops and deacons particularly specified? Because it belonged to them to *bear rule*. They were at the head. The church, therefore, is addressed as a body with its head and members.

There is another denomination, of which you have taken no notice. I mean the Methodists; who, in respect of their internal discipline, appear to me to come nearer the primitive standard than any others. In their classes and bands, with their leaders at the head of them, we see the apostolic exhortation illustrated,—“he that teacheth, on teaching; he that exhorteth, on exhortation.” The catechists and catechumens of an early period, proceeded, I conceive, on a similar plan.

But the principle of democracy, for which the Congregationalists so pertinaciously contend, has no countenance whatever from the New Testament. The emblems employed by the sacred writers, to exhibit the nature and design of a church of Christ, absolutely preclude the idea.

In Rom. xii. and 1 Cor. xii. the church is compared to a body, consisting of many members, having the same affection one towards another, though greatly differing, as they necessarily must, in dignity, importance, and usefulness. In 1 Tim. iii. the church is compared to a household, of which the bishops and deacons are the rulers, and the rest in subjection to them. This perfectly agrees with the exhortation, (1 Pet. v. 5.) “Likewise, ye younger, submit your-

selves unto the elder ; yea, all of you, be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility ; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.”

This principle of equality is as injurious in its effects, as it is unscriptural in its nature. Where it is *practically* regarded, as it is among the Baptists, it leads to contention, division, and those endless separations, by which that sect is peculiarly distinguished. Where, on the other hand, in order to prevent these effects, and to counteract the pernicious tendency of the system, the pastor and deacons form a secret conclave, and draw around them a line of circumvallation, within which none but themselves are admitted,—they are liable to be charged, at any of their church-meetings, with a violation of principle, and an assumption of authority, in direct opposition to their avowed sentiments.

Having thus freely communicated my views, agreeably to your request, I should be happy to hear from you in reply. The subject is important, and well worthy of investigation. In the mean time, I remain, with affectionate respect,

Dear Sir, yours in the best of bonds,

* * * * *

OCT. 5, 1830.

* * To the above no answer has been returned.
*

AN
ADDRESS

DELIVERED ON LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE

OF

A CHAPEL

FOR

CONGREGATIONAL DISSENTERS,

AT ARUNDEL,

THE 29TH OF SEPTEMBER, 1836.

BY WILLIAM DAVIS,

Minister of the Croft Chapel, Hastings.

PUBLISHED AT THE REQUEST OF THE MINISTERS AND OTHER FRIENDS
PRESENT ON THE OCCASION.

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AND HASTINGS.

—
1836.

A large impression of this Address has been printed, by the request, and at the expense of several liberal friends who were present when it was delivered.

By the Author of this Address.

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AN ADDRESS, &c.

IT has long been the practice to lay with some attendant ceremonies the foundation stone of useful and splendid edifices. The bridge that spans the flood—the literary and scientific institution that graces the circus—the cathedral that rises above the lofty spires of the metropolis, and the humbler, but, perhaps, quite as useful building destined to receive a congregation of Protestant Dissenters, has each, on the day of its foundation, received this honor. Any apology for the course we now adopt would be, therefore, superfluous. I solicit, then, my Christian friends, your candid attention to the following remarks.

We are not assembled to condemn or arraign other denominations of Christians, either for their opinions or their practices. Far from it. We meet to assert our own liberty, to state the grounds of our separation from the Established Church, and thus to justify our proceedings, to the spectators of our conduct; and to those, who shall on a future day behold the edifice that is about to lift its head from the dust.

Our forefathers laid claim to *liberty of conscience*. They struggled for it during many a fierce conflict. They laboured for it with unconquerable perseverance. They attained it: and they have committed it to us, as a precious deposit, to be kept for the generations following. They laboured and we have entered into their labours. The result of their efforts, like some invaluable precious

boon, has been entrusted to our care: and we are bound, for our own, for our children's sake, and for the sake of our country, to preserve it unbroken and entire. It is equally incumbent on us to transmit it; that in this land, at least, down to the latest period of posterity, every one may worship God according to the dictates of his conscience, in full security. But while we assert liberty of conscience for ourselves, far be it from us to deny it to others. It is as much the right of those who differ from us, as it is our right who differ from them. It is the right of one sect: it is the right of all sects. Men in power have denied this right, and they have withheld it too. Where it is neither denied, nor wholly withheld, it may be restricted, by the strong hand of ignorance, of bigotry, or of persecution—as, in too many countries, and throughout too many ages, it has been,—but yet, viewed as the natural privilege of man as man, considered in a state of separation from all other rights (and could it be proved that there is one only abstract, natural, aboriginal right, we should not hesitate to affirm that this is that one) every human being, whether he freeze at the pole, or pant at the line, whether he enjoy the luxuries of the east, or eat the hard-earned labour of his hands in the west, may claim it, and say to the Government that either withholds or restricts it, “you are unjust, you violate the right of man, you encroach on the prerogative of God.”

We belong to a sect which has ever stood prominently forward as the uncompromising and determined advocates of the right of *private judgement*. On such a topic it may appear trite to refer to Hume; but we know not how to avoid the reference. This tory historian has said, that “the precious spark of liberty was kept alive by us” when we bore the scorned name of Puritans—the spark, not of civil merely, but of religious liberty. And when the two thousand noble confessors, in the reign of the faithless and profligate Charles, preferred the disgrace and privations of nonconformity with a good conscience, to the honors and emoluments of conformity with a bad conscience, they set an example of suffering patience, of high principle, and of correct moral feeling, which their descendants of the past and of this present generation have not been slow to follow; and from which we trust that neither we nor our children will ever deviate.

To *persecution* under every form we have been at all times opposed. As a sect we have no respect for the past, nor have we any sympathy with the present advocates of religious pains, penalties, and tests. To *these* almost every sect except our own has been in succession attached: and as power has accrued to them, they have too frequently employed it, to compel, by the fear of punishment, or by the hope of reward, all to come within their pale, or to acquiesce in their *platform* of discipline, and peculiarities of doctrine. As a denomination, we recognize only one great spiritual enclosure—the invisible, and undivided Holy Catholic Church: we acknowledge only one standard of religious truth—the word of God, as contained in the volume of the Holy Scriptures: we bow to one, and only one, supreme authority in our Ecclesiastical constitution—the Lord Jesus Christ, the head over all things to his Church.

It is not our intention to dwell on the minor reasons for our Dissent. These are important, and, in the view of many, amply sufficient to render our separation justifiable. But we have one great, prominent, and powerful reason which is not only available to justify us as Congregationalists; but it would be equally sufficient were we the adherents of any other mode of Church Government. In other words; we are not Dissenters merely because we are Congregationalists. With our ideas of the character and tendency of Ecclesiastical Establishments, we should be Dissenters were we Episcopalians, Presbyterians, or even Wesleyan Methodists. We do not hesitate to declare that our preference is with Congregationalism. We have objections to Episcopacy, to Presbyterianism, and to Wesleyan Methodism: but we might prefer any one of these to all the rest and yet remain Dissenters. It is quite possible to conceive of Wesleyan Methodism in connexion with the State, and frowning contumeliously on all other sects, excluding them from all places of trust, profit, and honor, and refusing to their youth the benefits of a University education. We can conceive also of Presbyterianism as occupying precisely the same position. With the views we entertain of the *great reason* for Dissent, let us suppose ourselves for a moment *fully* convinced, that Presbyterianism, or that Wesleyan Methodism is the only scriptural mode of Church

Government, and that the one we deem thus scriptural and correct, occupies the position we have referred to, we should, notwithstanding this remain Dissenters—for it is not the *mode*, the *form*, the *outward designation* of the Established Church to which we principally object; it is the union of any mode of Church Government with the Secular authority. It is the systematic, permanent, and habitual blending, of the sacred with the secular, the carnal with the spiritual, the things that are Cæsar's with the things that are God's. It is not the countenance, the sanction, no, nor even the pecuniary aid of the Civil Government to which *all* Dissenters object—it is the interference, the dictation, the authority of the Civil power in Ecclesiastical affairs, which, to all who acknowledge the supremacy of Christ in his Church, render Dissent inevitable.

This, then, is the great objection of Dissenters; and we do not hesitate to declare our conviction, that such a union of the Church with the State, as that to which we have just alluded, is a great error in the Constitution of the country. While this union remains we *must* be Dissenters. When it ceases to exist, Dissent will cease with it. And then what a vast proportion of the envy, strife, and sectarian contention which are found among us will be annihilated, and like the vapours of the night, which the rising sun disperses, for ever pass away and be soon forgotten.

To trace this union of the Civil and Ecclesiastical authority to its source is not difficult. We need not go back to the first rise of Christianity, for then the Civil power was not united with, but opposed to it. The early history of Christianity is the history of its persecution, and of its progress:—of its persecution, in the kingdoms in which it appeared, and of its progress, in spite of that persecution. This was its position in the first, in the second, and in a great part of the third century. It at length received the sanction of the Roman Emperor, and was raised to wealth, to dignity, and to honor. Thus it continued, the lapse of time increasing its power, until in a few generations it placed its foot on the very authority which had lifted it from, what some have deemed, its debasement; and Spiritual Rome acquired an influence, to which the imperial city in all her pride of victory and extent of conquest never attained. The Secular in the first instance gave its

sanction to the Ecclesiastical power, until ignorance having pervaded all classes but the clergy, the former order of things was reversed, and the Secular was compelled in its turn to look up to and to submit to the rule of the Spiritual authority. Thus the Apostolic command, "submit to the powers that be," received a new import. For the apostle doubtless intended the Civil power. But during the period alluded to, the magistrate was subject to the priest, the king to the bishop, and eventually, magistrate and bishop, priest and king, all bowed the knee to him, who was sometimes impiously designated, by the astounding titles of, "our Lord God, the Pope."

These days and the scenes they disclosed have passed away ; and another and a very different prospect has long been gradually opening on the States of Europe. The Civil power has in this, as well as in many other countries, resumed its ancient authority : and in these realms in particular, the Church, still retaining its connexion with the State, has long since ceased to be paramount, and has become subordinate. It has resumed its ancient position with the State : or rather, the State has taken up a position in which the Church, which is associated with it, is at once the creature of its power and the subject of its influence. Since the reign of the Eighth Henry, it has been thus dependant : and now its temporal affairs, and even its spiritual arrangements are subject to the permanent control and regulation of the Government. To this control and regulation we cannot submit. We are therefore Dissenters.

Let it not, however, for a moment be supposed that we have any objection to the Civil Government of these realms. It is our glory and our defence. Our opponents have frequently represented us as its enemies. Some we believe have done this ignorantly ; but not a few, we fear, have brought this charge against us knowing it to be false. There are many who in the heat of partisanship care little for truth ; and set even probability itself at defiance, that they may find an opportunity to villify, and degrade those whose religious opinions and practices do not concur in every respect with their own. But our best defence is the history of Great Britain ; which proves to every impartial mind, that enemies to the State are very rarely to be found in the ranks of Dissent. We have always been the friends

of freedom : it is, therefore, impossible that we can be the adversaries of the British Legislature. No. We are not the advocates either of an Oligarchy, or a Despotism : least of all do we desire a wild and lawless Democracy. We admire, revere, and love our own limited Monarchy. But notwithstanding this we cannot consent that it should govern and regulate our Churches. Nor does it pretend to interfere with them. As Dissenters we are without the sphere of its control. Our principles do not permit us to come within it. And could the most excellent form of Government that the liveliest imagination of political theorist ever fancied—a pure, undivided, omnipresent Despotism, with a monarch, bearing for power, holiness, and energy the very character of an angel—could even this be realized—even *this* would not win us over to the belief that it is right, in every thing of a religious character, to be subject to the Civil power, and to take our mode of worship, our discipline, and our creed from its dictation. We “obey,” we believe, “the powers that be,” both in the letter and in the spirit of the Apostolic precept. We cannot suppose that the apostle intended by this precept any more than that the Roman converts should submit to the state in all matters of Civil regulation. Had he intended that the precept should involve submission in religion also, he would have subverted the very Christianity he sought to diffuse : for in obeying it, the believers at Rome would have necessarily fallen back into idolatry : they must have bowed down to gods many and lords many.

It has been urged against us that as Dissenters we *have taken up new ground*. Our Nonconformist forefathers it has been said, never thought of the sweeping objection we now advance against all Secular Establishments of religion. Be it so. Let us then, retire for a moment from the new ground we are said to occupy, and revert to that occupied by our forefathers. Their objections are termed old : let it be remembered, however, that if we have discovered a *new* objection, we can neither forget nor surmount those which are termed by our opponents *old*. With this latter class of objections, Churchmen and Dissenters are, in the present day, almost equally conversant. We will touch on some, but not dwell

on any of them. Our forefathers objected to the baptismal service : to the right of confirmation : to the form of absolution : to the burial service : to the number and varieties of Ecclesiastical officers and dignitaries ; to the repetitions in the liturgy ; to the discipline, and—above all—to the authoritative imposition of any rite to which they conscientiously objected. We are quite aware that it is urged against these objections that they are flimsy, futile, and trifling. But we naturally ask, to whom are they flimsy, futile, and trifling ? Not certainly to those who conscientiously conform ; for *they* do not of course view them as objections. They do not appear to them as a speck, or a slight stain, or even as an inconsiderable blemish. But the question is not, how does error appear to him who regards it as truth ; but what appearance does it present to him who views it as error. In other, and perhaps less offensive words, how do these objections appear to him who is a Dissenter on account of them ? The answer is not to be found in the reasonings, and special pleadings of the Conformist, but in the conduct of the Nonconformist—conduct very frequently attended with odium and persecution : and inseparable from no trifling amount of self-denial and of sacrifice. In former times these objections were in the case of great numbers insuperable ; and we are convinced that were the *new* objection, as it has been incorrectly termed to be obviated and satisfactorily answered, these *old* objections would with the great body of modern Dissenters, remain quite as insurmountable as they were to the Dissenters of an earlier period.

But what is that comprehensive and allabsorbing objection which to the Dissenters, both of former times and of this present age, gives strength and validity to all the rest ? We reply that it is that very objection which some curious discoverer has thrust prominently forward under the designation of a new objection. New ! It is as old as the act of uniformity ; as old as the reign of Elizabeth : the Lollards felt its force. New ! It is as old as the days Dioclesian and Nero ! It is as old as the days of Demetrius and his fellow-craftsmen at Ephesus. It is as old as the den of lions, into which Daniel was cast in the reign of Darius—as old as the burning fiery furnace which was heated one seventh time hotter than its accus-

tomed degree of heat soon after the golden idol had been set up in the plains of Dura—and in every age and in every country, where there is piety enough, and knowledge enough, and thought enough to discern the right of private judgment, and to mark any unreasonable and unscriptural infringement of that right, this objection will start into being and into active operation.

The dominant Church and the Secular power have sometimes *united* in prescribing the religious doctrines to be believed, and the religious practices to be followed. They have, however, occasionally issued their prescripts independently the one of the other. If we were inclined to bow to either of these authorities, it would be to the Church rather than to the State. But we cannot bow to them when conjoined: neither can we bow to the State, when, as in this country, it reserves to itself almost the whole power of regulating the affairs of the Church. Under whatever circumstances either the one or the other of these powers, or the two united have enforced their prescripts, their tendency, to say the least, has invariably been to infringe on the rights of conscience. They have a habit—a habit of which it appears impossible to deprive them—of enforcing on the conscience as scriptural and divine, modes of faith, and rules of practice which men of piety and of thought can not regard as worthy of this high character.

But we moreover object to this supreme authority in the Church, because “one is our master even Christ and all we are brethren.” And we object to this authority in the State, because our Lord has said, “My kingdom is not of this world!” It is different from the world in its character, in its spirit, and in the sphere of its authority. The kingdom of Christ breathes the spirit of Christ, partakes of the character of Christ, and is subject to the exclusive control and authority of Christ. We speak with all due reverence for the legislative authorities of the realm, while we urge the enquiry on those who have the best means of ascertaining the truth, and ask, Do the great legislative authorities of this country breathe the spirit of Christ? Are they conformed to the moral image of Christ? And on the supposition (is it any thing more than a supposition?) that these two enquiries could be answered in the affirmative: we

have then to ask, have they received, by any unquestioned and unquestionable delegation, power from Christ to prescribe to us our faith and our practice? Our Puritan and Nonconformist forefathers could not comply with many things enjoined by the Church and enforced by the State. They doubted the authority of the one, and the scriptural knowledge and wisdom of the other. They objected to the authority of the dominant Ecclesiastical power, and to the authority of the Civil power in religion both in its *expression*, and in its *effects*. We object to it in its *principle*. We grant that they did not go so far as we do: but yet their principles, carried out to their legitimate extent, would have landed them on the very same spot we now occupy. They did not broadly affirm that the union of Church and State was inexpedient and unscriptural—they lived at a time when any bonds, even those of a Tudor or a Stuart, appeared preferable to the shackles of Papal Rome. The royal hand that had strength enough, and courage enough, to break these fetters, was looked up to as all but divine: and the exchange from the terrible scourge of Ecclesiastical supremacy to the sceptre of temporal power was hailed with delight. The supreme authority of the *Priest* in the Church has now passed away, that of the *State* remains: but the day will, we believe, soon dawn, when the revealed will of God will receive from all men of piety the implicit subjection which it demands and deserves, and Christ—and Christ only—be once more regarded as the sole king in his Church.

But we have done with the controversial part of our Address. My ministerial brethren who are present will concur with me in the affirmation, that topics relative to our Dissent from the Establishment are hardly ever touched on in any of our public addresses. To our ministers it is far from being an alluring theme; and we are persuaded that our hearers would soon be weary of it. It is, on many accounts, far from being *pleasant* to dissent. It is both more easy and more agreeable to go down with the tide—than to work, with strenuous and persevering effort, our way upwards against its current. But the dead may swim with the stream; the living only can swim against it. While we are carried along with the multitude our course is easy, and our progress hailed perhaps with plaudits. But to press on our way in a direction the reverse of that which the

great body of our fellow-countrymen pursue, requires a conviction that we are right, and a spirit of mild and unconquerable perseverance. This is, in many, though not in all localities, the duty and the privilege of the Dissenter : and, we must be permitted to add, that it bears a striking resemblance to that of the Christian, who, though all be opposed to him, must still pursue his way contrary to the course of this world.

While we thus expound our own views, and justify our procedure as Protestant Dissenters, we presume not to condemn those who adhere to the rites and ceremonies, to the mode of worship, and to the discipline, which prevail in the Established Church. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." "Happy is that man who condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth." We rejoice in the change which during the last fifty years has been passing on that Church—a change, though not universal, nor perhaps even general, yet very extensive. We hail with delight the zeal, and the faithfulness: the sound theology, and the unwearied exertions, of many of our brethren of the united Churches of England and Ireland. We sympathize with not a few of them, in their restrictions, their privations, their oppressions, their disappointed hopes of usefulness, their conscientious objections to many things in their own communion, their labors, their afflictions, their persecutions, for the sake of Christ, and his Holy Gospel. We respect them as brethren! We love them as brethren! We pray for them as brethren! May grace, mercy, and peace be with them! They believe the same truths; they practice the same precepts with ourselves. They feel kindred emotions, and manifest a similar spirit. Their trust is in the same Saviour, and their hope is to dwell in the same heaven. We are, then, members of the same mystical body; branches of the same stock; children of the same family. We have one Lord, one faith, one hope, one God and Father of us all. They may disesteem us for our Dissent; and condemn us for what they deem, perhaps, an excess of scrupulosity. But we will not condemn the motives, which induce them to cleave to a Church which we regard in a light very different from that in which they view it—which they regard as an instrument of almost unmingled good to the country at large.

It is not our intention to contest this point with them. We will not enter into any discussion on the abstractions of the voluntary system on the one hand, or on the other, into any statistical enquiries, to prove the inferiority of the compulsory method of supporting religious ordinances. We prefer the *concrete* to the *abstract*: and we rejoice that we are assembled at Arundel this day, not to discuss the voluntary principle in its abstraction, but to mark its concrete operations—operations which are no novelty in Arundel. A brief sketch of the rise and progress of Evangelical truth among the Dissenters of this town will evince the truth of our affirmation. The following narration is the substance of a statement contained in their church book.

There had been from time immemorial a great deficiency of Evangelical instruction in this part of England. About the year 1767, the Rev. Mr. Glasscott, vicar of Hatherleigh, Devon, made zealous efforts for the spiritual benefit of the people of Arundel. He preached one Lord's day at the Shambles, in the High Street, without interruption, and gave notice that he intended to preach there on the next Sunday. But some of the influential people of the town combined to frustrate his intention; and he was driven with brutal violence out of the town. He, however, was followed by many to a spot about a mile from Arundel, where he preached; on which occasion several persons received their first serious impressions. After the lapse of a considerable time a meeting-house in Tarrant Street, was registered for public worship, and when vacant was used for that purpose. In this place the late Dr. Illingworth, and several ministers in the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion preached, and from two to three hundred persons were sometimes present. Before the commencement of the year 1784, the Rev. Mr. Hay (afterwards of Ringwood, Hants, then of Bristol, and finally of North America) having quitted the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion, took the pastoral charge of a small Independent church formed at Arundel; and a dwelling-house, adjoining the meeting-house, was fitted up as a place of worship for their use. Articles of faith and discipline were drawn up for them.

In 1784 the present meeting-house in Tarrant Street was built, on ground purchased by Mr. Thomas Finch, one of the members of

the church, who gave £200 towards the whole expense, which amounted to £400; the remainder Mr. Hay proposed to collect, but he accepted an invitation to Ringwood, when not more than £89 had been contributed. Mr. Finch, (a man whose name well deserves to be kept in memory,) advanced the remaining sum. On receiving a bond for £120 from the Rev. Henry Foster, of Uckfield, Mr. Finch assigned the premises to eleven trustees, whose number, when reduced to five, was to be renewed. This deed was regularly enrolled by Mr. Finch. Various ministers supplied the pulpit at Arundel, after the removal of Mr. Hay, till 1805. When the pulpit was only occasionally supplied, till the close of 1806, when the Rev. Mr. Arbon, then of Chichester, engaged to supply Arundel once a fortnight, on Wednesday evenings; and the Rev. Mr. Moore, who succeeded him, continued the same kind services. Good Mr. Finch entertained the ministers, and paid, aided in a very inadequate manner by the congregation, their travelling expenses, and the incidental outlays for the chapel. That the Dissenters of Arundel were influenced by an exclusive love of Evangelical truth, separate from all party feeling, is evident from the following pleasing circumstance. At the time referred to, a pious and zealous clergyman, the late Rev. W. Wilton, obtained the rectory of South Stoke, a village about two miles from Arundel. The Dissenters at Arundel had been in the practice of meeting on the Lord's day, for united prayer, and reading of printed sermons. But so soon as a faithful minister of the Gospel appeared in the neighbourhood,—when his voice was to be heard in his parish church, they closed the doors of their own chapel; and whenever the Rev. Mr. Wilton did not preach at Stoke, their meetings for mutual spiritual improvement were held. It was thus the fire was kept alive. But though it burned in the hearts of a few it did not spread, and a fear was entertained that as death did his work among them, their places would not be filled up by those of a kindred spirit. God, however, graciously provided for the continuance of his own truth at Arundel, just at the time that men were about to despair.

In January, 1809, the Sussex Mission Society was formed. The object of the institution, which was composed of ministers of various denominations, was to diffuse the blessings of the gospel in those

parts of the county which appeared most in need of its assistance. The sum of £85 annually was promptly voted to support an itinerancy, of which Arundel should be the centre, to be continued, if necessary, two years. It is well worthy of notice, that this plan had been carried into effect only a few short months, before the labors of the Rev. Mr. Wilton, at Stoke, were terminated by a sudden call to his rest and his reward. The chapel in Tarrant Street, was then regularly supplied from the academy at Hackney, under the care of the late talented and energetic Matthew Wilks, and the Rev. G. Collison. The Rev. Lambert Gore was sent from the academy to remain twelve months at Arundel, where he preached twice every Lord's day; at Pagham, thirteen miles from Arundel, on Wednesday evenings, and occasionally at other places.

It was about this time that the Rev. Samuel Greathead, of Newport Pagnell came to reside at Arundel, for his health; and afforded valuable aid to the cause of truth by his judicious and important advice. The Rev. L. Gore remained at Arundel till early in 1814. From this time till July of the same year, the Rev. W. Bannister took the charge, and eventually was ordained as the pastor of the church and congregation. His ordination took place in 1819: the church was re-organized, and from that date to 1833 sixty members were added. This highly respected minister, having witnessed the increase of the church and congregation, and the enlargement of the chapel, departed from this world in July, 1834. Peace to his ashes! Verdure to his memory! Perpetuity to his spirit!

Rather more than two years have elapsed since the removal by death of your late minister: and under your present excellent pastor fairer and brighter prospects are now opening, than ever at any former period cheered the hearts of the pious in Arundel. We have traced the exercise of the voluntary principle in this vicinity during the last sixty years, and we now behold a more striking and visible display of it. Your undertaking is a great and noble one. It has rarely, in so small a town, and with such a population in the vicinity, been exceeded. But the principle is at work; and numbers of edifices for the public worship of the Most High, both within and without the pale of the Established Church, are now arising: and it is delightful to entertain the well-grounded hope, that the greater

number of them are destined to resound with the truths of salvation. We have no doubt that this will be the case in that sanctuary, the foundation stone of which my respected brother, and your beloved pastor, is about to lay. So long as *his* voice is heard there, the corruption of human nature, the redemption of a lost world by the only begotten Son of God, the regenerating influence of divine grace, the sanctification of all the elect people of God, and the inseparable connexion between personal holiness and final and eternal happiness, will be the great themes of pulpit discussion. And, from the walls you are now about to rear, for the honor of God and his Christ, may the wildness of enthusiasm, the horrors of superstition, the rancour of fanaticism, the coldness of formalism, and the miserable negations of Socinianism, be for ever excluded! *There* may the golden foundation be ever free from the wood, hay, and stubble; and on it, down to the latest generation, may there be built the gold, the silver, and the precious stones of truth in sentiment, sincerity in character, purity in heart, and holiness in conduct. For it is not merely a material structure which you design to raise, but a structure of "lively stones, a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Your aim is not to advance the interests of a sect. If it had been, there are some here who would not have travelled so far to witness this solemnity. It is not to bring men over to a party. For such an object the speaker would not have crossed the threshold of his own doorway: much less would he have raised his voice in approval of your undertaking. No! It is something infinitely higher and better than this. It is to introduce men to the great, invisible, Universal Church, of which Jesus Christ is the head, heaven the home, and the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the one living and true God, the end.

Let each one who witnesses the interesting ceremony about to take place, cherish the desire, and urge with perseverance the prayer, that he may be, if not as a pillar, a support and ornament of the spiritual building, yet a living portion of that temple, which, resting on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, has Jesus Christ as its chief corner stone.

A WORD

TO

THE CANDID CHURCHMAN

UPON

CHURCH RATES.

By R Vaughan D. D.

“DOTH our law judge any man before it heareth him?” This question was urged on behalf of One who afforded the only perfect exhibition of human nature that our world has seen, and who was, at the same time, denounced as one of the greatest of offenders. “Not this man,” said the ministers of religion, and the great men, and the multitude, “but Barabbas;—now Barabbas was a robber.” We appeal to this memorable fact, simply as serving to shew how possible it is that individuals or public measures should be very much spoken against, and still be of a character to merit a very different treatment. Religious men, dissenting from the established, or endowed, church of this land, profess to regard the impost known under the name of “church-rates,” as *unnecessary, impolitic, ungenerous, unjust, and unscriptural*. Have you considered the grounds on which they so judge with sufficient care to make it proper in you to think unfavourably of them on account of these conclusions? We ask not this question of the boisterous, tyrannical man, who has few notions of right or wrong, except as suggested by the language of his party, or of his passions, and whom it would not be difficult to answer according to his folly. We confine our appeal, at present, to the devout, the dispassionate, the mind accustomed to approve “the things that are equal.”

Dissenters, then, affirm, that it is by no means *necessary* to the preservation of the edifices, or to the support of the worship of the established church, that there should be the exaction of church-rates. And surely a moment's reflection on the vast wealth possessed by the church, and on the almost boundless opulence of the persons who, in their long gradations of rank, are so loud in their professions of attachment to the worship of that church, must be sufficient to put the plea of *necessity* altogether aside. It may appear to those persons highly *expedient* and *desirable* that every class of people, and every denomination of Christians, should be required to contribute for such an object; but unless we regard their own professions of ardent affection toward the church as marvellously insincere, there could be no

room to apprehend that the churches would be allowed to fall into decay, or that the means for conducting the worship of God would not be supplied, even though provision for both were left at once to their own personal resources. The subtraction that would thus be made from episcopalian wealth for the service of the church, would not necessarily amount to the slightest perceptible privation in any one department of luxury. We need scarcely add, that even this trivial sacrifice is far from being demanded by the measure which the King's ministers have introduced on the subject of church-rates.

In the view of the dissenter, the demand of church-rates, in the present state of society among us, is exceedingly *impolitic* on the part of those who make it. However the matter may appear in the eyes of churchmen, in the eyes of a large, an intelligent, and an unquestionably honest portion of the community, the practice of extorting these contributions from persons who are not of the communion of the endowed church is most unjust, and often cruel. In the judgment of these persons, amounting, we may say, to some millions of the population, this is a point in regard to which the church puts herself in the wrong; and, powerful as she may be, she cannot place herself in such a position in regard to an immediate money question, and one of constant recurrence, without sustaining deep injury. Could we suppose that the present clerical crusade in the cause of church-rates would be successful, its leaders would find that they had been successful at the cost of lodging a deeply-augmented disaffection in the mind of those whom they had subdued, becoming only the more intense the more it should be repressed, and ready, perhaps, to ignite and break forth at a moment when they least expect, and to an extent of which they have no forethought. The man who should refuse to pay, and be persecuted by exclusive-dealers and others, would not, assuredly, be found to think more favourably of the Christian spirit of the hierarchy on that account. And the man who should possess the will to refuse, but fail in the principle or the courage, could not possibly love the church the more from finding himself thus unmanned and self-degraded beneath her influence, being made to concur from fear, with what he condemns from conviction. Nor can we regard the poor man, who is compelled to pay his annual pittance under the name of a church-rate, while exempt, as is frequently the case, on the ground of his poverty, from his poor-rate, as brought at all nearer the church by such compulsion, whether he be a person living, unhappily, in the neglect of divine worship, or preferring it as it obtains among dissenters. So widely would the social system be charged with inflammatory material by the continuance of this oppressive usage. It is to be regretted, as we think, for the church herself, that her rash defenders should have proceeded so far already in this course;

and their worst enemy could hardly do them greater injury than to crown their zeal with the success which they so much covet.

But it is said, that to give up church-rates would be to give up the very principle of a religious establishment, which requires that the state should provide for the instruction of its whole people, and that it should oblige its whole people to become contributors toward the making of such provision. But there certainly must be some mistake here. The established religion of this country previous to the Reformation, knew nothing of church-rates. The repairs of the building, and the expenses of public worship, were then provided for by separating a portion of the permanent revenue of the church to such purposes.* The usage of church-rates, accordingly, is a comparatively modern expedient, introduced by a change of circumstances; and one, we should suppose, that might be dispensed with under another change of circumstances, without any detriment to the principle of a national establishment.

But, supposing no necessary connexion to subsist between the question of church-rates and this alleged principle of an ecclesiastical establishment, is it wise to link them together, and to make the former rest upon the latter? We think not. From the complaints we hear about the want of church accommodation, and from other sources, it appears that, through no small portion of the kingdom, it is more than half the population whose religious instruction is unprovided for by the existing means of the established church; and are dissenters, then, to understand churchmen as saying, "We will not relinquish church-rates, because they are demanded on a principle by means of which we hope to secure from the state, and from dissenters among the rest, property enough to build churches to accommodate the whole people of the country; and because we hope to see in each of those edifices, as it is reared, the power to make an increased and permanent demand on all classes of the surrounding population in the form of church-rate." Such language is not only that which seems to be implied in the principle adverted to, but is, in effect, that which has been applauded on clerical platforms, and has gone up with the multitude of clerical petitions to both houses of parliament. Its effect on the dissenter, is to place churchmen before him in the light of a vast organized conspiracy, plotting to despoil him, to he knows not what extent, of his property, for episcopalian uses; and as meaning, for aught that he can tell, when they have superseded the necessity for dissenting labour, to put an end to dissent itself. In fact, this principle is, in strictness, applicable to those states only where one infallible

* For abundant proof of this, see an admirable Tract, intitled, "A few Historical Remarks upon the supposed Antiquity of Church-rates, and on the Three-fold Division of Tithes." By a Lay Member of the Church of England. Published by Ridgway and Sons.

sect is established and all the rest are proscribed ; and in a country like ours, where nearly half the population, and we may perhaps say full half the general intelligence, the public virtue, and the sincere piety which exist, is found among parties separated from the established church, could not be fully acted upon without exposing the weightiest interests of the whole state to the last degree of danger. We repeat, therefore, that if the law of church-rates is to be maintained for the sake of this principle, sound policy requires that both should be quietly abandoned, since the only effect of asserting such a principle amid such a state of religious parties as subsists in this kingdom, must be to convert the opposition of the dissenter, and of other opponents against the subordinate matter of church-rates, into a most jealous and settled hostility against the church herself.

In the third place, the exaction of church-rates is regarded by the dissenter as *ungenerous*. It proceeds on the assumption that there is nothing of real value in the moral or religious impression which may appear to have been produced upon society by the labours of dissenters. A venerable author, whose character entitles him to great respect, and for whose manner of viewing such questions much allowance should be made, complains in strong terms of the persons who say they do not pay rates to the church because they derive no profit from her, and demands, with a sort of triumph, "Is there then no profit to be reaped from the known influence of the public institutions of the land, sacred and civil, no security derived from the culture of religious principles and duties in our country ? Is it to go for nothing that men of all ranks, stations, and degrees, are taught to fear God, to believe his word on his own sufficient evidence, and to seek his kingdom before all things, as the end of their hopes ? Is the world not better for such convictions, and for the care used for their inculcation and encouragement ? Or does all this go for nothing, except the work be done by them, or done as they would have it ? Is the good grain less nutritious because it grows upon our borders ?"* How far those who refuse church-rates are necessarily unmindful of these matters for consideration will presently appear. We have to observe in this place, that the language cited is almost precisely that in which the religious dissenter is disposed to complain of a similar inconsideration and ingratitude. "Is it generous," he is prepared to ask, "that I should be accounted a cumberer of the ground, and taxed to aid your episcopalian worship in common with those who prefer it, while it is known that I provide my own chapel, support my own minister, pay the expense of my own worship, and labour with much cost to spread

* A Letter to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of London, by the Ven. Joseph Holden Pott, M.A., Archdeacon of London.

a regard for religious principles and duties in our country? Is it to go for nothing that I do, in common with those with whom I act, nearly all I may do, in order that men in various stations and degrees may be taught, both from the pulpit and in the school-room, to fear God, to believe his word, and to seek his kingdom before all things? Is the land no better for all this, or does it go for nothing because not done by persons in the episcopalian communion, and after an episcopalian manner?" Now the answer returned to these questions by the law of church-rates is in the affirmative; it counts no good as done to the nation except as done by the communion for which church-rates are levied. This we deem ungenerous; and a law which has lived to see the state of society so far changed, that its enforcement must compel Christian ministers and Christian magistrates to act on the principles of a proud ungrateful bigotry like this, has assuredly lived quite long enough.

But is it a fact, as intimated in the inquiries of the passage above cited, that the opponents of church-rates, of necessity, overlook all the moral and religious benefits that may have been conferred on the nation by the agency of the Endowed Church? By no means. They may not look on the good so conferred as being either so unmingled or so extended as the above passage seems to represent. They may have seen much in the constitution and working of our opulent ecclesiastical hierarchy as tending, in their judgment, in common with similar establishments in other ages and other lands, to produce almost any effect rather than "a belief in God's word," and a disposition "to seek his kingdom before all things." But admitting the good conferred by means of the Church of England to have been such as very greatly to outweigh any evil that may have been occasioned by it, is it true that those who refuse to pay church-rates refuse to make the slightest suitable return for that good? We answer again,—by no means. "Is it nothing," we ask, "that dissenters themselves, according to the spirit of our constitution, have been parties in attaching to the church her right of tithes, and her vast landed possessions? Must it go for nothing that her bishops are made to take their place among princes, and that her clergy generally are made to hold up their head along with the proudest gentry of the land. Must it, in the face of all this, be concluded, that the nation has done really nothing for the church, if she should rescind the law of church-rates, and leave the incidental expenses of the established worship to be provided for—in part by some more productive management of church property, and in part by a small pew-rent contribution from her devoted and wealthy adherents? Is it indeed a fact, that, this being done, it is only by expecting the clergy to become so many miracles of disinterestedness and generosity, that we can hope to find them going through the routine of

their duties with their accustomed efficiency? We will only say that we have not so mean an opinion of their intelligence, their zeal, or their sincerity. In the esteem of the dissenter, the nation has already done enough in the way of pecuniary patronage for the national church; let the enlargement of her sphere for the future be the effect of the spontaneous efforts of her own communion, demonstrating that the zeal professed in her cause originates in something more noble than a regard to worldly emolument or honour. Such examples would indeed do much to dispose men "to seek the kingdom of God before all things."

Dissenters further profess to regard the impost of church-rates in their own case as *unjust*. They so regard it, partly on the ground that dissenters, as it would be easy to shew, make much greater sacrifices for the cause of Christianity in England and elsewhere than churchmen; in part also, because, while they contribute more of their private substance and personal exertion to the cause of religion and humanity than their episcopalian neighbours, they are a people possessing but small means and opportunities for doing good in comparison with those neighbours; and lastly, because the extinction of this custom, while it would be felt as the removal of a serious grievance by one party, need not be productive of the slightest inconvenience to the other. Its continuance, under such circumstances, the dissenter could never fail to regard as exhibiting the tyranny of a wealthy majority over a needy minority; a tyranny aggravated by ingratitude as well as injustice, and exercised in very wantonness, or for the sole pleasure of appearing to be master. "*What are church-rates,*" said the 'Times' newspaper, "*but the MOST NEFARIOUS EXACTIONS, when levied upon our dissenting brethren? The Almighty has left man's conscience free, and it is therefore a ROBBERY in the eyes of Heaven to extort from a man support for that creed which he does not believe.*" But it is proper to add, that this was said a little before the memorable change which came over the spirit of the present conductors of that journal, between Saturday, the fifth of November, and Monday, the seventh, in 1834. Since that short interval, those gentlemen have received their accustomed pay for unsaying continually what they as continually said before.

In the last place—in the judgment of the dissenter the law concerning church-rates is *unscriptural*;—not only without the sanction of the word of God, but contrary to its injunctions and its spirit. In the opinion of such persons, the New Testament knows nothing of forced contributions for religion; and manifestly precludes them, by declaring, once and again, that no offering for the support of Christianity can be acceptable to its Divine Author which does not proceed from "a willing mind;"—or, in other words, that what is given for religion

should be given "freely." Of course the advocates of forced contributions have their reasonings to adduce against this interpretation of scripture; but it must suffice here to affirm, that the dissenter is fully persuaded that the Apostles of our faith would sooner have ceased to exist, than have descended to use either the bayonet of the soldier or the staff of the constable for the purpose of extorting money payments in support of religion. Hence, for many generations past, there have not been wanting those who on this ground, as well as on account of the objections which they take to what they regard as unscriptural in the doctrine or forms of the Endowed Church, have refused to pay, and suffered themselves to be despoiled, from year to year, to manifold the amount of the rate itself. Others, however, have supposed, that so long as a law of coercion on this subject exists, and so long as an attempt to obtain the abrogation of such a law may be, from the state of public opinion and feeling, altogether hopeless, or likely to be attended with greater public evil than advantage, so long it may be matter of prudence and duty to comply with it; but that the moment in which the use of lawful means for putting an end to such an enactment may be employed with success, is that in which they are bound by the most solemn claims of public duty to make use of such means, even to the extent of a passive resistance,—or a refusal to pay. Should the supporters of the obnoxious law, aided by power derived from the artificial circumstances in society, be found adhering to it in the spirit of faction, rather than yielding, in the spirit of equity and patriotism, to the fair expression of public sentiment, it may be that the extreme expedient of a general determination not to pay may constitute the only peaceable means by which to force the machinery of public affairs into their proper equitable channel. The signatures to petitions *for* church-rates, to the 2nd of March, were 9595; *against*, 190,981.

But when a man refuses to pay church-rates on the ground of principle,—that is, from his regarding the law relating to them as unscriptural, it is commonly said, and with an air of complacency which it is almost cruel to disturb, that such an objection is exceedingly futile, since it might be opposed to nearly the whole framework of civil society, so as to throw men back upon a state of nature and anarchy. But the parties who take this ground of objection to church-rates deny that any such general consequence can be fairly deduced from their conduct in this instance. The Quaker, who will not pay church-rates, never refuses to pay king's taxes, though the money doubtless goes to support forms of civil government which he does not in all respects approve, and is diverted, perhaps, in a very great degree, to the support of war, which he regards in all cases as atrociously immoral and unchristian. But the Quaker will not pay a specific tax

for religion, simply because in his judgment the state has no right to impose such taxes,—the manner in which a man shall serve God himself, and in which he shall endeavour to bring others to serve him, being matters which the state should leave to the conscience of its subjects, protecting all alike, and interposing only where pleas of conscience are made a pretext for breaking in upon the order and welfare of civil society. This is the Quaker's manner of rendering “unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's.” And there are religious dissenters who declare that they feel it to be their conscientious duty to take precisely the same ground, it being impossible, as they think, that they should become parties to what they deem an unchristian practice, kept up professedly for the sake of Christianity, without becoming offenders against God. More commonly, however, the difference between the Quaker and the religious dissenter who refuses to pay church-rate, is, that the latter does not deem himself bound to refuse such payments at all times, but in those seasons only when the removal of a religious grievance may become practicable by such means, and by such means alone.

But here it will perhaps be said, that this reasoning is not only opposed to church-rates, but to the existence of a nationally-endowed Christianity in any form. And this must be admitted. But when it is said that by contending against church-rates we can mean nothing less than the destruction of the Established Church, against this inference from our conduct we must also place our denial. We believe that the honest judgment, and sound social feeling of the country, are sufficiently in favour of the measure which proposes to relieve the pious dissenter from the burden of church-rates, to make it certain that the said relief must come; but we also believe that the Endowed Church would gain rather than lose in stability and popular favour by that measure; and that if she does not long continue her hold on the support of the nation, it must be as the effect of some tremendous indiscretions on her own part.

These observations are respectfully submitted to you by one who earnestly prays for the speedy restoration of the mutual exercise of esteem and affection among Christians, and of the feeling of good neighbourhood generally; but who can look forward to nothing except the incalculable increase of existing evils, so long as the Churchman shall persist in extorting this unjust impost from the dissenter. If it be little for the Dissenter to refuse, it is less—very much less for the Churchman to relinquish. Christians should aid each other, but it should be in the manner of the apostolic maxim—“not by *constraint*, but *willingly*.”

Rev J. Belcher

A LETTER

with the Author's respects.

TO THE

EDITOR OF THE QUARTERLY REVIEW,

IN REPLY TO AN ARTICLE IN THE LAST NUMBER

OF THAT JOURNAL

ON THE SUBJECT OF

CHURCH RATES.

BY A LAY DISSENTER.

(Nathanael Hailes, Junr.)

“ Et tu, Brute ? ”

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A LETTER,

&c.

MR. EDITOR,

Is the "Church" *really* "in danger," that her champions, of every size and colour, are forth, marshalled in arms, beneath her ample banner? Both you and I know that the Church of Christ was never in danger; and that even the Church of England is only so through the folly, arrogance, corruption, and bigoted infatuation of many of her professed supporters. We know, moreover, that "Church in danger" is a weapon always kept burnished in the armoury of Act-of-Parliament Christianity, to be brought forth whenever it is likely to serve a party purpose; and we know, further, that the Church **RATES** are in imminent and hopeless danger. Doubtless, too, you think that many other abuses connected with the Church—among them, its subordination to the State—are in jeopardy, as probably they are, and certainly they should be. It is *therefore* that our ears are assailed with the thunders of controversy and denunciation. It is therefore that, in addition to the periodical charges which dissent has to endure from the Church, it must sustain, also, such a charge as that of the Right Reverend Father in God, the Lord Bishop of Exeter; and the simultaneous attacks of all the Tory and High-Church scribblers who consider themselves capable of wielding a goose-quill.

Truly, all Lilliput is in motion! The pocket-pistol of

Fraser; the musketry of Blackwood, and the smaller periodicals; the furious, but harmless, discharges of *The British Critic*; the bludgeon of the bully of Printing-house Square, who, with all the tact and delicacy of a drunken Irishman in a row, knocks down his friends when he cannot reach his foes, and bellows forth "the thunder" so peculiarly his own—less effective, albeit, than it might be, if it could be understood by readers residing more than half a mile from Billingsgate.—These, with innumerable poppings and squibbings of lesser warriors, are brought, at one and the same moment, to bear on the hapless objectors to church-rates; and, to overbrim the cup of our affliction, you, Mr. Editor, must needs choose the same instant to open upon us a fire from the very *heavy* battery of *The Quarterly Review*.

But, to change the figure, in the midst of your torrent of warnings and of threatenings, there are some oozings and gushings of the milk of human kindness. It is very kind of you, for instance, to condescend to put the public "in possession" of the question of church-rates; and endeavour to abate the "popular hallucination" which has existed with respect to it. It is, too, exceedingly kind of you appropriately to benefit us by the experience of "one of our enterprising northern voyagers;" and introduce us to sundry "chasms, ridges, and other formidable obstacles," which, otherwise, would never have been known to exist, and which, even after your announcement, we are in much danger of passing without discovering. Remember, Mr. Editor, we are not at "the mast-head," but on our march, and well acquainted with our ground. We meet with none of your formidable "ridges," and "chasms," and ice-bergs. Our only obstacles are *bears* and *wolves*, which, in such an expedition, we, like your northern voyager, calculate on encountering. These, of course, as we proceed to

"Molest their ancient, solitary reign,"

growl, and howl, and make sundry hideous noises, the inva-

riable purport of which is "*plunder* in danger." But we know their natures well : we know that hungry, rapacious, cruel, malevolent, as they are, they are cowards in essence ; and that, if we advance steadily forward, looking the brutes full in the face, they will speedily slink back to their dens—their ferocious yellings subsiding into the whine of disappointed malignity. Allay your fears, therefore, Mr. Editor ; we are, I assure you, in a fair way for the attainment of our object—not the discovery of the North Pole, but the abolition of church-rates.

You commence your argument, as courtesy commands me to call it, with a proposition to which I cordially assent. I cannot, however, allow that Ministers used undue haste in entering on the question of church-rates, or that precipitancy, in commencing or carrying on reforms, is a fault with which at any time they can justly be charged. I quite agree with you, and so do all the dissenters with whom I ever conversed, that to abolish rates, and charge the repairs of churches on the Consolidated Fund or any other national property, would not relieve the Dissenter. Such a proceeding would be a mockery and an insult. It would be to relinquish a claim on his right pocket, and take the money from his left ; depriving him, at the same time, of whatever voice he may now have in the matter. The only practicable alteration is certainly that from which you shrink with instinctive horror—"to leave it to the respective congregations to uphold the churches for themselves." An awful hardship, no doubt ; yet one which you must make up your minds shortly to endure. I cannot agree with the following :—

"The principle lies at the root of all government, for it is merely this, that the minority shall give way. And if the contrary be contended for in our religious relations, why should it not be in our civil ? One man may think it hard to support a church when he dissents from its doctrines ; another, to support an army or navy when he objects to the profession of arms ; a third, to support

a police, when he repudiates such abridgment of the liberty of the subject. Now, if all these objections are to be allowed—and why should they not, if all men's alleged scruples are to be listened to?—all government is dissolved; for the nation must split into sections, according to corresponding divisions of opinion; and as opinion is infinitely divisible, those sections must split again, till at last each individual must do what seems right in his own sight; and then the principle has worked itself out, and the decomposition of the social system is complete.”

You see, then, no points of distinction between religion and war or police. This is a view of the subject very naturally taken by the disciples of Constantine—by those who make Christianity a political institution—who regard religion as a national, not an individual concern. These can scarcely be expected to comprehend that the salvation of a man's soul, and the worship of God, may be a matter between God and himself, while war and police are affairs between him and his fellow-men. You continue—

“It may be replied, that in the cases we have supposed, the parties objecting do, in spite of themselves, reap the benefits of the institutions against which they protest, by their reflex operation for good upon themselves, their property, their comforts, or their lives; that though they resent an army, yet, there being an army in spite of them, no foreign foe lays waste their fields; or a police, yet, there being a police, no robber breaks open their doors; and that thus they receive ample interest for what they contribute towards these wants of the state, having nothing to complain of, save that (as King Lear's fool says) they get ‘a blessing against their will.’ The same answer may be made to those who resist church-rates: they, too, ‘have their full equivalent,’ to use the nervous language of Archdeacon Bather, in one of his admirable charges, ‘in having a better land to live in; the purification, through the Gospel, of the moral atmosphere in which they breathe being worth more than any man has to pay for it.’”

King Lear's fool and Archdeacon Bather are, undoubtedly,

high and congenial authority ; but, what a falling-off is here ! Surely the passage should have run thus—" Though they resent an army, yet, there being an army in spite of them, no foreign foe lays waste their fields ; or a police, yet, there being a police, no robber breaks open their doors ; or a Church, yet, there being a Church, the arch-fiend does not prevail against their souls." Can you thus perfect your parallel ? If not, what becomes of the argument ? Remember, too, that paying for an army, we do not pay in addition whenever a battle is fought or a town captured ; or a police, when a murder is discovered or a thief apprehended ; but that, paying for a Church, we also pay specially for its use on every occasion of baptism, marriage, burial, or what not.

But the principle of church-rates, it appears, " lies at the root of all government, and is merely this, that the minority shall give way." You assume that the Church party is the majority in England. You would find it difficult, I apprehend, to prove your position. The Church-worshippers of the metropolis and its neighbourhood, for instance, as stated in a letter published by the Honourable and Reverend Baptist Noel, and addressed to the Bishop of London, are in number about 247,041. The population, I believe, is about 1,500,000. You must therefore pronounce a large number of those who never attend public worship to be orthodox churchmen, in order to make out your majority. But allowing that you have a majority in England, and admitting, for argument's sake, your principle, you must, in return, allow that should the relative numbers change, and the Independent, Baptist, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Irvingite, or any other sect, at any future period become more numerous than your own, the English Episcopalian will then be bound, if required, to pay for the support of that form of religion, or he will " violate a principle which lies at the root of all government." Surely, when you put forth the doctrine of majority, you forgot your Church's doctrine of apostolical succession, which we have latterly heard

so much insisted on, and which modestly denies to the Greek, and Scotch, and all other Christian Churches, in all parts of the world, the right to publish Christ crucified to perishing sinners, and administer Christ's ordinances. All is to be done, as you tell us, "through her" and her alone. Had it been left to her, in what a state of worse than midnight darkness would the whole world have been now involved ! For she has never, to her shame be it spoken, made any vigorous effort in the cause of God, but when goaded to exertion by a spirit of rivalry, and the fear of losing possession of the flesh-pots of Egypt.

To leave out of the question remote cases, how will your doctrine of majority apply to existing circumstances ? How will it serve you in Ireland ? *The Quarterly Review* has ever zealously and actively advocated the domination of the English Church there, with its tithe-processes, imprisonments, and massacres. With what consistency, Sir, can you uphold Church of England episcopacy, even to the bayonet and the ball, in that country, where the members of the Established Church are but a tiny minority ? On your own principle you should acknowledge that the ascendant party there, being the minority, should give way to, and aid in supporting the Romish Church ; and that, by refusing to do so, they strike at the root of all government. If you meant to speak, not of England only, but of the kingdom collectively, why (still, for the sake of argument, allowing you the majority) do you not enforce episcopacy in Scotland ? And episcopacy not being established there, nor church-rates paid, how do you so easily effect the government of that country ?

The foregoing is a specimen of Church consistency. You very ingeniously endeavour to prove inconsistency on the part of Dissenters.

" It is the *principle* of the payment, if we understand it right, to which the Dissenter objects, and not to the amount. And yet it seems singular, that whilst he sees so much to reprobate in the principle which makes one man minister to the support of another

man's creed, he should, nevertheless, accept on his own part the *Regium Donum*, a provision for the poor preachers of the three denominations voted out of the national purse ; and which, it appears, from the discussion in Parliament towards the close of the last session, he is not willing to relinquish. True it is, that the sum is small—a four or five thousand pounds matter—but the principle is not the less objectionable on that account ; for we presume that he would shrink from sheltering himself under the argument of the frail girl, ‘that her child though it was, it was a little one.’ The Dissenter, in his New Marriage Act, does not abstain from drawing upon the Churchman's purse for the support of his registrar, he being clerk of a union, though he must be well aware that, so far as that functionary is employed in celebrating a marriage, he is employed in doing a gross violence to the conscience of every Churchman who pays him his salary, and who differs from the Dissenter in holding marriage to be a holy rite, and not to be made over to unconsecrated hands. Surely it would be as well that the Dissenter should not deny a principle when it happens to work for the Church, and hail it when it happens to work for the Chapel, lest he should expose himself to misinterpretation, and give room for the surmise that his scruples are not so disinterested as they profess to be.”

Your charge of inconsistency, and your facetious comparison of the Dissenter to the frail girl, who excused her frailty because her child was but a little one, is a frail prop to your cause. I could not help thinking, while reading your Review, how much throughout your cause resembles the girl in her frailty ; and how lamely, in some portions of your article, you adopt her method of excusing it ; more especially where you advocate the continuance of church-rates, because they are to the Dissenter a mere “pepper-corn”—“a crown a year,” for which the profit of thousands of pounds is received in return ; and where you assert that his voluntary contributions to the cause of religion are “little, very little.” On the *facts* just enumerated it is unnecessary to animadvert. They are worthy

of your article, of the journal in which it appears, and of the cause which you habitually support.

The opposition of the great body of Dissenters to the continued receipt of the *Regium Donum* has, within these few years, been frequently and unequivocally expressed.

Surely you do not labour under the "hallucination" that the marriage of the Dissenter is to be *celebrated* by the registrar, or, as you have it, *his* registrar. If I understand the Act, the registrar is a person appointed by the State, to witness marriages on the part of the State, and is, to all intents, the servant of the State, for its own purposes, as much so indeed as the collector of taxes or of church-rates. And, moreover, the Dissenter is to pay for the presence of the registrar.

The Dissenter, it appears, is *interested* in supporting the Church for many reasons: one being that he received from it, either immediately or remotely, the light which he possesses. Why so? The Scripture from which the Church of England derives all the light she possesses, although her partisans publicly profess to have other sources of light, and call those who take the word of God as their sole guide, "Ultra Protestants;" the Scriptures exist independently of that Church; existed ages before she had a being; and will continue to exist ages after she shall have ceased to be; when she shall only be historically remembered as the wealthiest, the most selfish, the most unjust, and the least useful of existing state-churches.

He is also *interested* in the maintenance of the Church, according to Mr. Ostler, of whose work you favour us with but one short sample, the arguments contained in which prove nothing but the author's ignorance of this subject, because dissent "seldom continues in a family beyond the third generation." He is therefore interested in keeping the Church snug and warm, that it may be ready for the comfortable reception of his renegade son or grandson, as the case may be. And he is

yet farther interested, as is sapiently urged by Mr. Ostler, and with equal wisdom cited by yourself, because he may some day see fit to renounce his own creed and embrace episcopacy!

But we are not in possession of the whole strength of your case yet. The following is a knock-down argument:—"Nor is this all that can be said in defence of the *principle* of church-rates; *so long as you have national church-rates, you have a National Church Establishment, properly so called.*" The next sentence, although not so convincing, is interesting on account of the extreme novelty, or rather perfect originality of the facts:—"Rates are a sort of pepper-corn rent (for they are little more) paid by the people, in testimony that the people has an interest in the Church's services."

Greatly should I be rejoiced, and considerably richer should I be, Mr. Editor, if I had now in my possession all the "pepper-corns" which I have contributed to the support of that Church; for I have paid heavily to it. But your assertion, which is received by me but as an ungenerous taunt, is, to many of my poorer fellow-countrymen, whose goods have been wrested from them and sacrificed by the agents of your *apostolical* Church, a heartless and cold-blooded insult! Your description of the clergy of the Church of England is one of the most poetical, because most imaginative, pieces of writing which I have lately seen. From it we learn that the riotous, dissipated youth who leaves the University for the pulpit; the dandified sprig of nobility; the political dependent; the small capitalist, who buys a living as an annuity; the nominee of the Lord Chancellor, for the time being, of any religious principles or of none; the soldier or sailor, whose trade of destroying the lives and maiming the bodies of his fellow-men having failed, and half-pay being somewhat scant, exchanges the sword for the prayer-book; the dunce of the family, who, having no other chance of obtaining a maintenance, sits down in the family living; these, and all

the other hungry leeches who fasten on the church, that they may be gorged from the industry of the country, have no sooner received on their heads the fingers of a bishop than they become, by Act of Parliament, paragons to whom Adam before the fall bore an inferior and very distant resemblance. As I think a picture of so much excellence ought to be made known as extensively as possible I transfer it to my pages.

“The nation at large, without any reference to distinction of creed, does benefit in other ways besides those we have named, in having a body of functionaries in the country on whom society can devolve a number of offices which they are peculiarly qualified to fill; some springing out of laws and regulations which courts call for at the hands of the legislature; and some out of laws and regulations which private societies adopt for themselves. It is a great public convenience, independently of the question of religious instruction, to have in a nation a body of individuals of the station, class, and character of the clergy—safe men upon the whole to trust; intelligent from their education; pledged to good behaviour from their profession; known in their several districts from their functions; at hand from the necessity of fixed residence; universal in their presence from the parochial divisions to which they are severally attached, and so covering every nook where it is wanted that a law or a regulation, public or private, shall penetrate. And accordingly it is difficult to frame an Act of Parliament for any improvement whatever in our internal economy, without some appeal or other in it to the services of the clergy,—services which they never undertook to discharge, but which, when required of them, they discharge cheerfully, under a feeling that whilst the nation, without any distinction of creed, maintains a Church Establishment of which they are the ministers, they owe to the nation, without any distinction of creed, whatever services their favourable position in society enables them to afford. Thus, if the Government is called upon to meet any emergency, any national visitation or distress, the clergy are the organs of which it avails itself to act upon the prudence, the energies, the benevolence of the people. If the Government has occasion to ascertain the life, the identity, the character,

the conduct of persons who have claims upon it, say soldiers or sailors, it resorts to the clergy for its information, as the readiest and most trustworthy it can procure. If the Government had need of any statistical details, such as may conduce to the public welfare, the clergy are the quarter to which it chiefly looks for satisfactory intelligence. If, again, in private life, friendly societies have need of certificates of the *bonâ fide* sickness of their members on their application for relief, the signature of the clergyman is that they insist on. If the soldier or sailor has any communication on his part to make to the War-office or the Admiralty, it is to the clergyman that he repairs for assistance and advice. If a poor man falls under any family disaster, his limb broken, his pig dead, it is to the clergyman he goes for a testimony to the truth of his tale and the fairness of his fame, and that testimony secures to him the help of the district in which he lives. If the thrifty cottager wants his little earnings deposited in the Savings-bank, to the clergyman he confides it, to negotiate the matter for him. If he desires to have his frugal will made, that the nothing he possesses may be secured to the parties whom he loves best, it is the clergyman that he solicits to draw it out. These are but a mere sample, *medio ex acervo*, of the little services of a hundred kinds which the clergyman renders to the country at large, as a free gift, quite independently of his ministerial duties, and without any reference whatever to creed, sect, or sentiment. So that none but the clergy themselves, or those who happen to be under their roof for a season, and witness the numberless calls of this sort that are made on them, know how very large a portion of their time is occupied in such vocations as these."

* * * * *

"We have sometimes amused ourselves with thinking what would be the amount of fees which the other learned professions would receive for the discharge of offices such as these—the time, the mileage, the material, all taken into strict account; the daily life of a clergyman, it should be remembered, being in fact the daily life of a professional man of the best education in great practice."

To all these duties, fulfilled by the clergy, "without distinction of sect or party," (!!) but with the feeling of a father for

all his parishioners, are added a host besides, such as furnishing "the means of discharging a doctor's bill; of providing a child with clothes before it can go to place; and of rescuing a poor family from ejection for arrears of rent."

Pope described one "Man of Ross," and Goldsmith one "Village Preacher;" the excellencies of both, and a host of excellencies besides, of which Pope and Goldsmith never dreamt, unite, it seems, in the character of the sixteen thousand, or so, ordained clergymen of the Church of England. The author of *The Deserted Village* did not pretend that his hero was without "failings:"—

"For e'en his failings lean'd to virtue's side."

While your army of worthies are personified, positive, uncontaminated virtue. There is one line referring to Goldsmith's Preacher, which peculiarly applies to your thousands:—

"A man he was to all the country dear."

The ministers of the Establishment are, one and all, as we full well know, "to all the country dear," and *very* dear, though not exactly in Goldsmith's sense of the word; for you cannot apply to them the remaining line of the couplet—

"And passing rich *with forty pounds a year*."

Supposing that the clergy *were* all that you have recorded of them, would their virtues be less angelic if church-rates were abolished? Are all their merits to be attributed to the pepper-corns? Would they have fewer opportunities of doing good, considering how vigilantly, as you tell us, they "search" for them, though the Dissenter should be relieved from injustice.

But *are* the clergy of THE Church—the true, only, apostolical Church, what you have represented them to be? Will any man who has ever lived on the outside of a lunatic asylum recognise your picture? Who, as he beholds your sleek bishops dozing among the Peers of the land, or lolling in their

carriages along the haunts of fashion, or sitting at tables loaded with luxuries, and surrounded by lacqueys, thinks of the fishermen of Galilee? When we see, hear, or read of a Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Exeter, or a Right Reverend Lord Bishop of London, do we discover any resemblance in character, condition, or spirit to those whom they claim especially to represent, for instance, the Right Reverend Lord Bishop John, or the Right Reverend Lord Bishop Paul?

And what is the truth as regards the inferior clergy? A large proportion of them you will find, if you seek them, engaged in "effectual toil" at the dinner-tables of their richer parishioners; paying or receiving morning calls or evening visits; following the hounds, or shooting pheasants and partridges, and that perhaps three or four days consecutively during the sporting season; attending the race-course, or the theatre; trying causes at the quarter-sessions; sending some poor old decrepit being to gaol, in their individual capacity of justice of the peace, for picking fire-wood from the hedges, or asking charity of their wealthy fellow-creatures; canvassing on the part of candidates for Parliament; spouting and drinking at a Conservative dinner; directing seizure for tithes, or consulting with, and directing their attorneys in actions with their parishioners springing out of tithes; wrangling at the card-table; or other such employments.

There is another large division of them, decidedly more amiable, but scarcely more pastoral, than the former. They are studious men; critically acquainted with the classic authors of Greece and Rome; cultivating the *belles lettres*, or the fine arts, or the more elegant sciences, such as botany, geology, and entomology, in which many of them attain respectable proficiency, as their innumerable publications prove. These are gentlemanly, and, in themselves, innocent occupations, but scarcely compatible with the multifarious engagements which you assert are fulfilled by the clergy.

Of the poorer class of his parishioners the parson ordinarily knows nothing but by seeing them at Church, or being brought into collision with them as a magistrate, in which capacity your reverend "functionary" is usually dreaded above all his fellows in the commission of the peace, on account of his harsher construction, and more oppressive execution of the law. I am not writing at random. I have been "under their roof for a season;" have observed them constantly in various parts of the country, and shared in their amusements. Were any of these gentlemen sent for to the bed of the dying, they would probably, if they had no suspicion of infection, go, read prayers to the patient, and administer to him, perhaps an entire stranger to them, the ordinance which Christ administered to his assembled disciples. But I am quite certain that they would be greatly astonished at being called from the shooting-party, the card-table, the conversazione, or the study, to dress some child to go out to service; discharge a doctor's bill; take into consideration the case of "a dead pig;" or to make "a frugal will." Depend upon it, Mr. Editor, they will have nothing to do with pigs, dead or alive, except in the shape of tithe. It cannot be denied, however, that the Church is very instrumental in enabling the poor man to leave "*nothing* to the parties whom he loves best."

There is a third portion, unhappily a most diminutive minority, who are spending their strength, and gifts, and acquirements in the cause of Christ; earnestly and constantly seeking the salvation of the souls committed to their care. You will find these, however, the Newtons, Scotts, Cecils, and Richmonds, not particularly serviceable as civil "functionaries."

I have described the clergy as I have seen, and see them. You and I cannot both be correct in our representations. Our readers will bring the observations of either to the test of their own experience, and decide between us. To show, however, that I am probably right in my estimate of the stream, I will

furnish you with a sample of the fountain. In the last book of Mr. Jesse, an orthodox authority, you will find in a chapter entitled "A Visit to Oxford," the following graphic sketch:—

"The next day I dined at the Fellows' table of M——— College, and I shall not soon forget the scene. Most of the Fellows I met were a little advanced in life, and one of them was between eighty and ninety years of age; he had resided at his favourite College upwards of sixty years, and thought there was no place equal to it. If good eating and drinking, and a warm, snug Fellow's room, constituted happiness, he certainly had them in perfection. After an excellent dinner, we adjourned to this room. A sort of kidney-shaped table was placed before the fire, round which the party sat, the two Senior Fellows ensconcing themselves in comfortable arm-chairs on each side of the fire-place. A bottle of port wine, such as is seldom met with, and which did great credit to the Bursar, was placed on the table, and protected from the heat of the fire by a little triangular mahogany screen. It circulated, however, with considerable rapidity, and was as rapidly renewed: indeed the attendant, who appeared to have executed the duties of his office for a great many years, and was a solemn and respectable-looking man, seemed to be perfectly aware when a fresh bottle would be wanted, and he always made his appearance with it to a moment. Its brightness was then duly examined, and it made its rounds like its predecessors. It was, however, the old stagers who paid the greatest devotion to their favourite beverage; and notwithstanding their frequent libations, it appeared to produce no effect upon them until late in the evening. The first symptom which was evinced of exhilaration, was a proposal from the Senior Fellow for a catch, by way of enlivening the company. This was opposed by some of the Juniors, who were probably aware of what was coming, and were fearful of some breach of decorum in the presence of a stranger. It was, however, carried against them, with a little assistance I lent to the proposal, as I felt curious to hear what sort of a catch would be sung by the venerable Seniors of the College. After a short consultation, the thing was settled, the Juniors declining to lend any aid to the performance, but retaining their seats in dignified silence, looking, however, with

some degree of contempt on their more aged brethren. The patriarch of the room acted as leader of the band, and made his arrangements accordingly. As I had expressed my readiness to lend any assistance in my power in the proposed catch, he turned to me, and to my infinite surprise and dismay, desired me to sing 'The Cur.' On requesting to have my part more fully explained to me, that I might do it all due justice, I was informed, that when it came to my turn I was to chant out lustily, 'I sing cur,' and afterwards join the chorus, *plenâ voce*. The old fellow then began his part by shouting out, 'I sing Cob-;' the next performer followed him by squeaking out, 'I sing ler;' a third, with stentorian lungs, exclaimed, 'I sing Tin-;' and then I had to add, 'I sing ker.' The chorus was then vociferated, the hint having been given by a loud tap on the table, '*A Cobbler and a Tinker.*' The catch, however, did not end here, for it went on *ad libitum*, getting louder and louder every instant, till the venerable old walls echoed with the shouts and laughter of its jolly old Fellows, and they were at last obliged to stop from mere exhaustion. Never shall I forget the scene: their sides shook, while they wiped their eyes, which twinkled with glee and joviality, and it was some time before they recovered from the effects of the exertions their bodies and lungs had undergone. Some other catches were sung, which I do not now recollect, and late in the evening broiled bones and other stimulants were introduced, followed by a huge silver tankard of mighty ale—

'With toast embrown'd, and fragrant nutmeg fraught,'

I must say that Oxford ale deserves all the panegyric which Warton has bestowed upon it, when he exclaimed—

'Balm of my cares, sweet solace of my toils,
Hail juice benignant!'

The old fellows showed themselves to be true disciples of the Poet Laureate, and all due justice was done to the foaming tankard. When it had been properly discussed, a large tumbler of punch was placed before each person who chose to partake of it; and at a late hour we separated, after I had received many hearty shakes of the hand, and many pressing invitations to renew my visit.

* * * * *

“The next morning one of the Junior Fellows, who has since distinguished himself for his talents and learning as the Bishop of ———, called upon me, in order to account for the scene of the preceding evening. He assured me that it was one of no frequent occurrence, but that, on two or three particular days of the year, the Senior Fellows kept up the old customs of the College, and on those occasions infringed a little on their usual regular habits. I had been too well entertained, and had enjoyed myself too much, to think any apology necessary, although I could not help admiring the anxiety of my companion for the character and discipline of a College of which he was so distinguished an ornament. After all, the bounds of propriety had been but little infringed upon. There was excitement without intoxication, and mirth and laughter without either vulgarity or indecorum.”

The sagacity of the future bishop, who was fidgetty at a stranger, and one with authorly propensities, being present at these orgies, and who thought an explanation necessary, together with the fact of his being *learned*, makes it not difficult to identify the individual. If the clergy were what you represent them to be, the fact, considering where and how they have been educated, would prove miraculous powers to reside either in the Act of Parliament or the act of Ordination.

You make, Sir, what you doubtless consider an unanswerable appeal to the Dissenter, on the ground that it is his *interest* to pay the church-rate. You have already shown, or endeavoured to show, that he is in many ways interested in the payment; but this is a plain matter of pounds, shillings, and pence interest. The Dissenter, it appears, “by contributing perhaps a crown a year to the repairs of the church, secures to himself the advantageous handling of scores, perhaps of thousands, of pounds.” By an assertion so preposterous I should think even churchmen will not be deceived; while the argument, even if founded on truth, would not influence the Dissenter, for he possesses conscience, and is guided by principle.

He will therefore persevere until the odious impost is abolished, though the ruin with which you threaten him should be the consequence.

The wealth of the country you assert is in the hands of Churchmen ; and you appeal for proof of the fact to lists published in newspapers, of donations “ to hōspitals, infirmaries, asylums, and the like,” Dissenters, Mr. Editor, do not publish their charities in the newspapers ; yet they give munificently, and that habitually, as I could prove to you, and it is therefore that there are fewer hoards of wealth among them. They are money-getters, but not money-keepers. To prove to the Dissenter the necessity for submission, you add, “ retaliate he cannot ; because, in the first place, the funds, as we have said, are chiefly on the Churchman’s side ; and, in the next place, the Dissenter does already, almost to a man, spend whatever he has to lay out with his brother in dissent, and with none besides.” The latter fact would be as amusing as that about “ a crown and thousands of pounds,” if it were not less ridiculous, and more dishonest. The Dissenter does, and has done as you say the Churchman has done, and is perfectly justified in doing ; he has only in his dealings “ had respect to the honesty of the party and the quality of his merchandise.” The Dissenter, then, according to your doctrine, must yield to injustice and spoliation, because “ retaliate he cannot ;” and because wealth, as well as power, is arranged against him. A truly Christian doctrine, and well worthy of a Church professing to enjoy a monopoly of Christianity !

In a form how characteristic of Church-of-Englandism do you put the question.—The Church party is wealthy, commanding the accumulated property of the country. The Dissenter has to support his family and his own religion entirely by the labour of his hands, the sweat of his brow. The former, because the latter cannot retaliate, wills that the Dissenter shall contribute to the expense of the Churchman’s worship also ;

and if, from conscientious scruple, or through inability, the money is not forthcoming, violates his dwelling, takes the table from under his frugal meal, or his chairs from beneath the weary bodies of himself and his family; heaps legal expenses upon legal robbery; and when goaded by oppression, presumption, and insult, he exerts himself to get free from the unholy thralldom, seeks to destroy his trade, blight his industry, and cast his family upon the iron charity of the workhouse! And this is Christianity—the Christianity of the Church of England!

The country is greatly indebted to your “bishops, priests, and deacons,” spouters, pamphleteers, journalists, and “scribes of low degree,” for thus early throwing aside the mask and cloak in which you have so long concealed yourselves. By so doing you have exhibited to the country a spirit of paltry, yet venomous and systematic persecution, which only the combined energies of bigot-haters may hope to crush; persecution which, if it dared, would erect an inquisition in Lambeth Palace, and kindle fires of torture in Smithfield, as it has already reduced families to starvation, and committed heads of families to a dungeon; persecution which, if it might venture, and found such a proceeding necessary to its ends, would convert England into one Rathcormac.

We are told, forsooth, that “so long as the Dissenter was content with his position in the state, which was that of complete toleration, and did not seek to disturb the establishment, his scruples were respected.” Toleration! the toleration of the spoiler towards the despoiled; continuing just as long as the latter does not attempt to withhold the booty! There is an infinity of insolence in that word toleration. Men professing to be Christians, indeed, *tolerating* the worship of God by a fellow Christian, and contenting themselves with merely taking, for their own use, *a portion* of his goods and chattels! There is toleration for gambling-houses all over

the metropolis; for tea-gardens and open shops on the sabbath; for gin-palaces in all directions; for the thousands and tens of thousands of prostitutes who nightly defile our streets and public ways with obscenity; and the Dissenter has also toleration, and ought, forsooth, to be well contented to pay for it; saying, with Shylock, to those who condescend to take his money—

“ Shall I bend low, and in a bondman’s key,
With ’bated breath, and whispering humbleness,
Say this—
‘ Fair Sir, you spit on me on Wednesday last;
You spurn’d me such a day; another time
You call’d me—dog; and for these courtesies
I’ll give you thus much monies!’ ”

Your kindness, Mr. Editor, knows no bounds. You have “ for some time sunk the sin of schism, as if there was not a word about it in all Scripture.” Perhaps there is as much wisdom as liberality in having thus sunk it; for the schism mentioned in the Scriptures cannot mean secession especially from the Church of England, for that Church was not in existence till ages after the Scriptures were written; and if it mean secession from any established form, then the Church of England is essentially schismatic.

You say very justly “ that every man will soon have to take up his ground;” and truly Churchmen are taking up theirs, as may be seen in an article in the last number of that church-organ *The British Critic*, and various other recent publications. It is the ground of Popery which they are taking. Read the article referred to, Mr. Editor, and you will perceive that there is less difference between the Churches of Rome and England than “ ’twixt tweedledum and tweedledee.” The ground, then, that your Church must take up is at the side of her venerable mother. Indeed the daughter would present a much more respectable appearance, clasped to the bosom of her parent, and enjoying the full warmth of her scarlet mantle,

than she now does, holding by her apostolical finger, and limping after her, with a portion of the aforesaid mantle dangling over her *higher* members, while her lower extremities are left shivering in their nakedness.

Go back, Mr. Editor, go back with all speed, from Mother Church to *Grandmother* Church. The Editor of *The British Critic* will show you the way. The arms of the doting old lady will be open to receive you. The toe of his Holiness the Pope will not be withholden from your lips. "Take up your ground" without delay; for the time, as you well observe, is come when we must all do so. Let the High Churchmen generally avow, as many of them, bishops and others, have already done, their truly Romish tenets and spirit. Let the amiable, zealous, and pious minority come out from her and be clean. Then both the one and the other will have "taken up their ground," and added to their other virtues that of consistency, which neither at present possesses.

In the meanwhile you will lose the "pepper-corns" of the Dissenters, and must find a way of mending your windows, washing your bands and surplices, sweeping your churches, and ringing your bells, without dipping into the pockets of the Dissenters or the consolidated fund. You must depend on other supporters than the broker and the gaol, which will give your Church a much more Christian and apostolical appearance than at present. Just conceive for a moment, and, with your fine imagination, as exhibited in the article before me, you will have no difficulty in realizing the picture. Just imagine our Saviour in want of (not carriages, horses, and wines, but) necessary food, and directing his followers to go into some house, and demand of the owner money; that individual, from conscientious scruple, refusing; Christ then directing his disciples to pillage his dwelling and sell his goods for whatever they can get. Just imagine a few such incidents narrated in the New Testament. What a very different book it would then be!

The truths contained in the foregoing pages have been wrung from me, not so much by the injustice which I, as a Dissenter, have endured, as by the falsehoods, taunts, and mockeries which have of late been incessantly flung at the body of which I am an humble member, by those who benefit by that injustice. Do not, however, call this retaliation. Such it is not. In return for your thousand injuries and calumnies I have told you but a few plain facts ; facts to the accuracy of which the people of England can bear testimony. Brighter days, however, are at hand. The coercive Church, chiefly through the agency of its own partisans, is rapidly approaching that period when it shall be a Church only inasmuch as it is part of the Church of Christ, in the simplicity of the Gospel ; when the priestly corruption and political craft which now weigh, like an incubus, on its energies, shall be dis severed from it for ever. These are but as hay, and straw, and stubble ; and the fire which will consume them is already kindled.

I have the honour to be, Mr. Editor,

Your very obedient Servant,

A LAY DISSENTER.

December, 1836.

THE
ASSUMPTIONS OF THE CLERGY,
AS THE
ONLY AUTHORIZED MINISTERS OF CHRIST,
CALMLY REFUTED,
IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

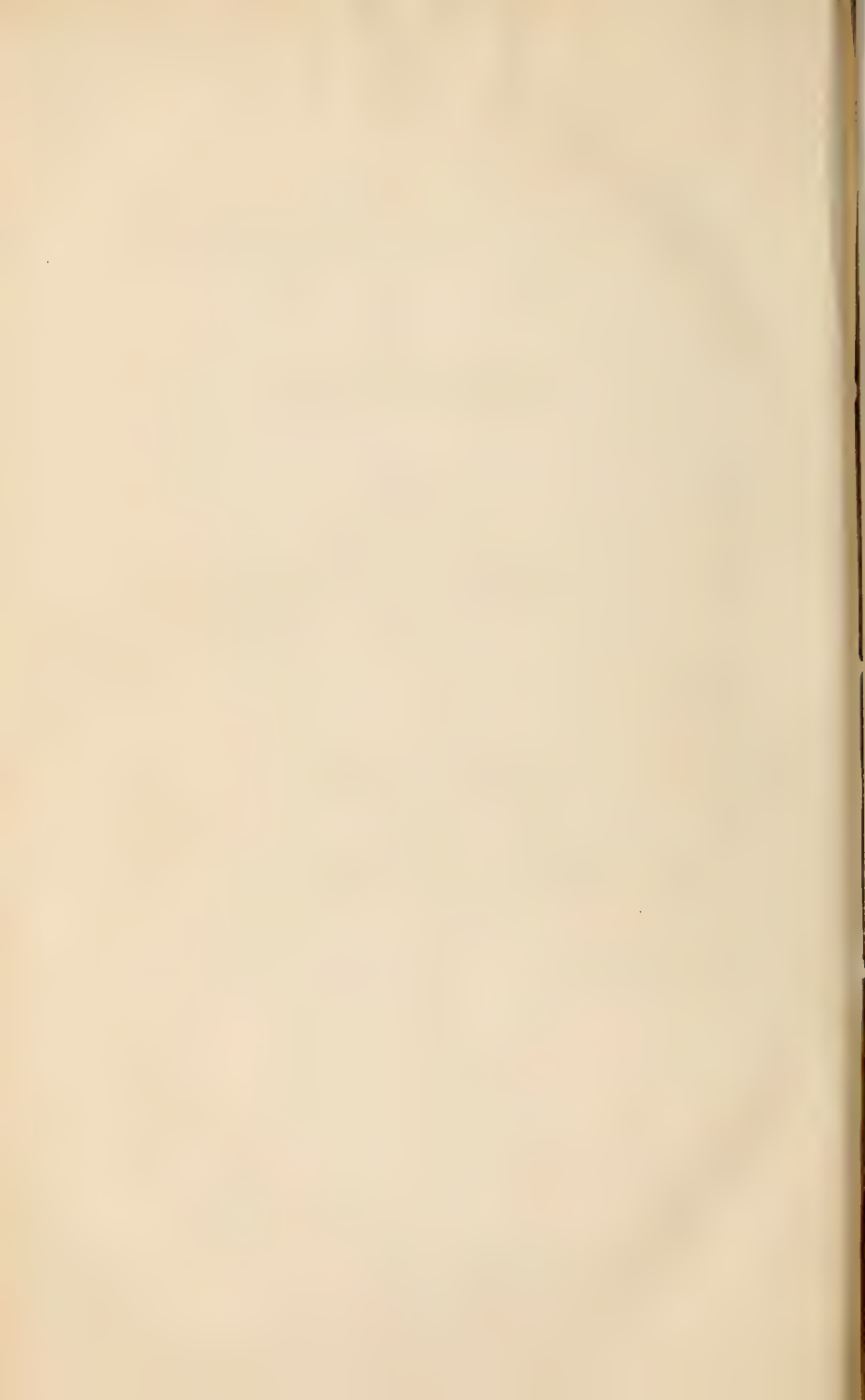
BY PHILAGATHON.

*(Rev. Thomas Finch, Pastor of the
Baptist Church, Harlow, Essex.)*

Are they Ministers of Christ? (I speak foolishly,) I am more.—*St. Paul.*

LONDON
JACKSON AND WALFORD, 18, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD;
AND
J. M. MULLINGER, BISHOPS STORTFORD.

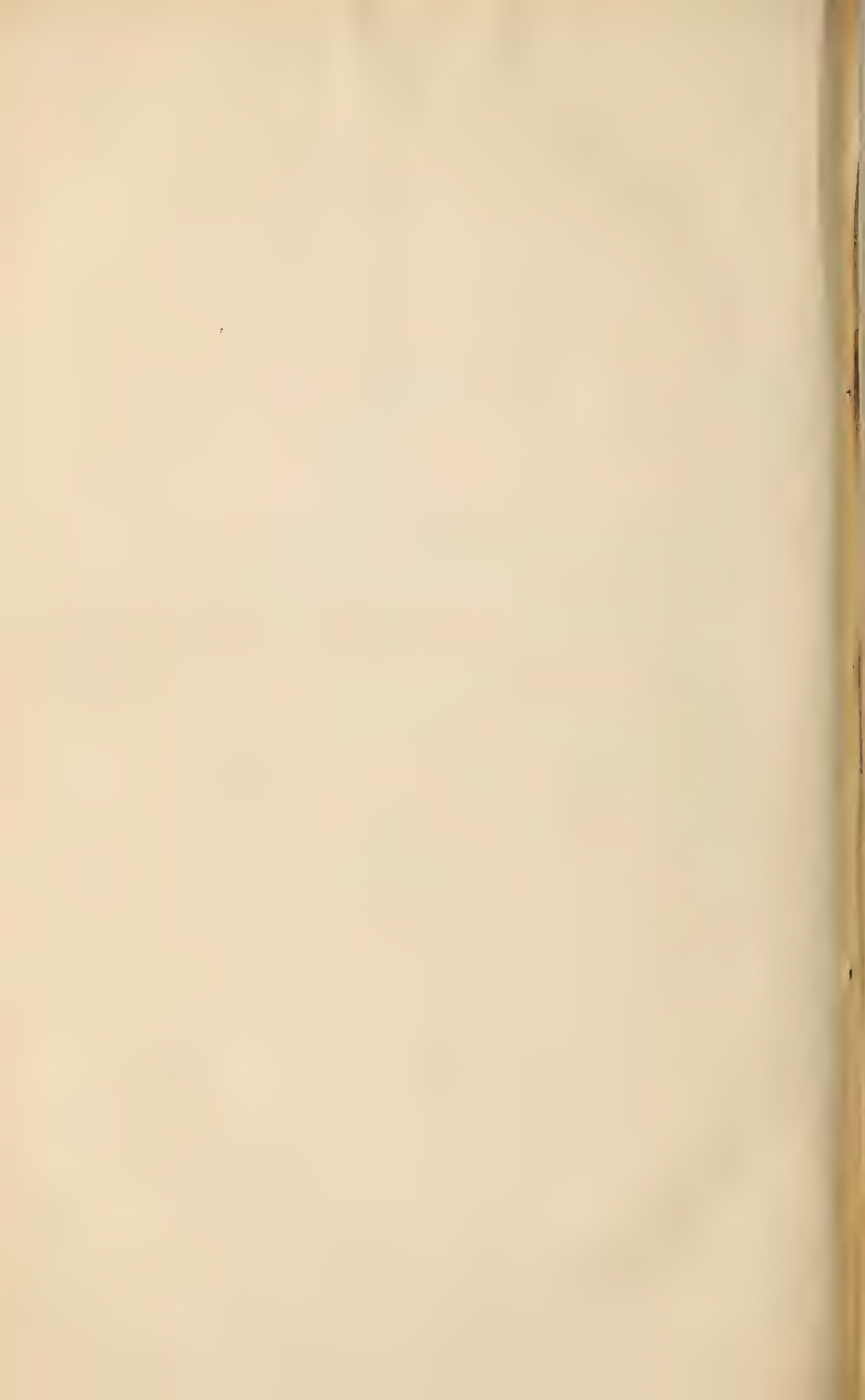
1837.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE contents of the following Letter, though occasioned by local circumstances, are of general interest, both to the Clergy and Members of the Established Church, as well as to Dissenting Ministers and Churches. In presenting it to the Public, the writer has purposely suppressed the names of all the parties concerned; not because he is ashamed of the authorship, or would make any mystery of the affair; but because he has no wish to wound the feelings of a clerical neighbour, by giving more publicity to his name than would be agreeable to himself. And although he has deemed it his duty to show the fallacy and uncharitableness of certain assumptions which that Clergyman has recently avowed, and which he holds in common with the generality of his brethren; yet he has carefully avoided all personalities, and is not conscious of having used any expressions personally offensive to others, or unworthy of his own character as a Christian Minister.

March 7th, 1837.



THE
ASSUMPTIONS OF THE CLERGY,

&c.

MY DEAR SIR,

The lofty assumptions made by the Clergy of the Established Church, as the only authorized ministers of Christ, invested with divine authority by apostolic descent, are well known. To the Dissenters in all parts of the kingdom, and especially to Dissenting ministers of all denominations, they have been, and still continue to be, a source of frequent annoyance and disgust, strengthened by the conviction generally felt, that these assumptions are as groundless and unscriptural, as they are delusive and insulting.

Sentiments of this description are frequently insinuated, and sometimes openly avowed, by the Clergy themselves, in their parochial visits and public meetings, and are echoed by their zealous supporters of the high church party, especially in the more fashionable and aristocratic circles. Many instances have come under my notice, both near and distant, in which these insinuations have been made among the poor and illiterate, particularly in the case of persons seriously disposed, but wavering in their opinions, or of families some of whose members were partially Dissenters. In such cases the assumptions seem to have been put forth with a view to depreciate in popular estimation the official character of Dissenting ministers, so as to draw away their hearers, or intimidate others from an occasional attendance upon their services. For this purpose attempts are made to create among the ignorant a superstitious belief, that the Clergy alone are, in a

special sense, the duly authorized and legitimately appointed ministers of God; that they possess this authority inalienably by apostolic descent, independently of all personal and moral qualifications; that the ordinances of Christ as administered in the Established Church, possess a peculiar validity and efficacy; that all who duly observe those ordinances, confiding in the ministers whom God has appointed to dispense them, are sure of salvation; that all other preachers, whatever may be their character, piety, and talents, are destitute of these peculiar and more sacred advantages; that we know and are quite certain the Church is the sure way to heaven, while all Dissenting forms of religion are irregular and uncertain, if not positively dangerous; and that while the pious members of the Church can receive from their ministers the certified absolution and remission of their sins, those who withdraw from its communion have no such assurance, but are left to the uncovenanted mercy of God. Such notions as these, however revolting to the judicious and well-informed, are calculated to distress weak minds, and to have a pernicious effect on the bigotted and illiterate, nourishing the worst feelings of a blind, self-confident, uncharitable, and soul-destructive fanaticism; and, I believe, my dear friend, some instances of the former have occurred within the limits of your own charge.

But perhaps these bold assumptions have seldom been expressed more ingenuously or in terms more undisguised, than was recently done by a respectable Clergyman in this neighbourhood, whose character for learning, purity of morals, pious zeal, and an indefatigable discharge of his parochial duties, stands high in the estimation of his parishioners and the neighbourhood. This occurred in a sermon he was preaching a few Sabbaths ago, from 2 Cor. vi. 1. "We then as workers together with him, beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain." In the former part of his discourse nothing was said particularly objectionable; but, having very properly commended the people for their past attention, and urged them to greater frequency and fervour in their devotions, he proceeded to make various assertions which appeared to some of his hearers extremely arrogant and uncharitable. Among other things of this description, he exhorted them "to be satisfied with the ministers of their own church, and not to regard their unworthiness, which would not prevent their conveying a blessing to devout

hearers, any more than Balaam's unworthiness prevented his conveying or pronouncing a blessing upon the Israelites." He said expressly, "that the ministers of the Established Church are the only ministers of God's appointment; that all other ministers are merely ministers appointed by men; and that the ministers of the Church are the only ones authorized of God, to pronounce to his people being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." He moreover said, "that he was a minister of God; and if asked how he had received his commission, he should say, from the bishop; that bishop received his authority from another, and so on in regular descent from the time of the apostles." And then added towards the close of his sermon, "that the people would probably often hear their apostolic church reviled," but very laudably exhorted them, "not to revile again, but to pity and pray for their revilers."

As these bold and unwarrantable assertions could not fail to be displeasing to the more liberal and intelligent part of the congregation, and afterwards occasioned many expressions of regret, I was of course soon informed of the fact. The accuracy of the preceding statement has likewise been attested by several respectable parishioners who were present on the occasion, and though warmly attached, some of them, to the Established Church, shared in the disgust which it excited. So far from having exaggerated the account, my informants assure me, that if the sermon were published, or put into my hands as delivered, it would furnish more points of an objectionable character than I have now stated. Indeed, my dear sir, I believe I shall not be doing the reverend gentleman any injustice, but quite the contrary, in assuming that these were not crude and hasty expressions, uttered under any temporary excitement of party feeling, which he would willingly recall; but his decided and fixed opinions, the deliberate expression of his conscientious belief, which he has no wish to conceal, and by which his ministerial labours are habitually governed. I can in truth "bear him witness that he has a zeal for God," though in my humble opinion, it is not according to knowledge. I have no doubt that in keeping aloof from Dissenters, and declining all co-operation with those institutions with which dissenting ministers are connected, and in the exclusive support of his own church as a pure and apostolic institution, he is influenced by principle and not by interest; and that he feels and acts

as conscientiously as St. Paul did, when "he verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." And, to use the language of a friend, "I am really persuaded that his zeal is *well-intended*, and if he could be convinced that his views are not in accordance with Scripture and truth, he would be induced to exchange them for more liberal and charitable ones."

I can truly affirm, my dear sir, that during my residence here, now nearly twenty years, I have never been accustomed to revile the Established Church or its ministers, but in private and public, have habitually discountenanced all sectarian and uncharitable feelings, and have shown a disposition as far as possible, to live peaceably with all men. It is, therefore, with considerable reluctance I am induced to impeach the judgment or censure the opinions of any of the Clergy, and much more of one whom I should rather esteem and honour as a neighbour and a minister of Christ. It would be infinitely more agreeable to my feelings, to see all neighbouring ministers regard each other, not as rivals or competitors, but as fellow-labourers in the same vineyard, and for the same Lord. But in the present case I have been called upon so urgently and from so many quarters, on public grounds, to rebuke the arrogance of these clerical assumptions, that any longer forbearance might be construed into a silent admission of their validity, from a consciousness of the fallacy of our own claims; which would be shrinking from the discharge of an obvious though painful duty, and sacrificing truth and the rights of all Christian denominations on the altar of a spurious charity.

If, indeed, these were simply the opinions of an individual, or were merely speculative notions not likely to produce any positive mischief, it would be wiser to pass them over with that silence which any thing so groundless and absurd merits. I do certainly hope and believe that there is a respectable and increasing number of the Clergy who entertain more liberal sentiments, and would not countenance any such lofty assumptions. But these opinions are, without doubt, cherished by the main body of the Clergy, who style themselves pre-eminently the *orthodox*; whose spirit has long reigned, and still reigns, in the splendid halls and colleges which grace the banks of the Isis and the Cam; and whose vital powers are embodied, and obtain in all parts of the kingdom "a local habitation and a name," in the character of a *High Churchman*. While

then the language of a neighbour has put these assumptions into a more tangible and explicit form, I beg, sir, you will consider my remarks not as having a local or personal, but a general reference on public grounds.

Besides, these assumptions are not innoxious even to the Clergy themselves, but in too many cases inflate the arrogance of weak minds; suppress that humility and candour which ought to distinguish the ministers of a meek and lowly Saviour; induce those lofty airs of official importance and sacerdotal authority, which in the present age, only make those who assume them, ridiculous and contemptible, the dread of some, and the scorn of many; while they prove an insuperable barrier to those reciprocations of mutual respect, those sentiments of ministerial equality and co-operation, which are essential to the spirit of Christianity, and to the unity and prosperity of the Christian Church. It is therefore most desirable to expose the fallacy of a vulgar prejudice, so repugnant to right feeling, so flattering to spiritual pride and intolerance, so abhorrent to men of sound and enlightened minds, so pernicious in its effects, and so calculated to bring upon the Christian ministry at large the scorn and contempt of unbelievers. Nor is it less desirable that the common people should have some plain rule of judging, some obvious marks, by which they may distinguish the true ministers of Christ from intruders into the sacred office; and may learn to estimate ministers of all denominations, not by their forms or professions, not by the mode of their appointment, or by some hidden power mysteriously conveyed by another's touch, but by the plain and tangible facts of suitable ministerial qualifications, and a consistent character, the fruits of wisdom and of faith.

If the Clergy of the Episcopal Church are, in truth, the only authorized ministers of Christ, and if all others are intruders into the sacred office, having no legitimate right to ministerial esteem, we ought at once, either to vacate our stations and fall into the common ranks of the Church, or to seek without delay that mysterious virtue of Episcopal ordination, which would give validity and success to our labours. But if the assumption be wrong, and utterly contrary to the mind of God, it ought to be exposed and refuted, that persons so unhappily misled by it, may release themselves from the delusion, and cultivate feelings and manners more in accordance with the gospel. And believing this to be the fact, and appealing to the

Holy Scriptures as our only guide, I shall endeavour, as calmly and impartially as possible, to refute these vain assumptions of clerical superiority, and to recommend sentiments more in unison with christian humility and candour.

With respect to that part of the first sentence under review, in which the worthy vicar exhorted his hearers, "to be satisfied with the ministers of their own Church, and not to regard their unworthiness," I have no objection to make, but cordially approve and recommend the principle. Certainly the members of one congregation or of one community, ought never to depreciate the ministers of other churches, or to entertain respecting them, any sectarian prejudice, any groundless or indiscriminate imputation, like that which induced Nathaniel to say, even in reference to Christ himself, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" At the same time they ought to be especially satisfied with their own pastors, when they have no specific cause to the contrary, whether inducted to that office by their own choice, as among ourselves; or by the appointment of others, on terms which they approve or acknowledge, as in the Church of England, and among the Wesleyans, and some other denominations. The ministers of Christ, in their several stations, have a right to expect from the people of their charge, the most candid and respectful consideration. We cannot, indeed, too strongly deprecate that idolatry of talent, which too often presents to ministers of great popularity, the incense of immoderate applause; and that spirit of unhallowed favouritism, which extols one preacher as more than an angel, and pours contempt upon another no less worthy of esteem; by the influence of which, Christian societies are sometimes split into factions, like the Corinthians, saying, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephass; and I of Christ." Nevertheless, it is on many accounts highly desirable, and even necessary, that Christian pastors should live in the affections, and stand high in the estimation of their respective flocks. When they are duly qualified for their office, assiduous in the discharge of its functions, and careful to maintain a corresponding character, it is but just on the part of their hearers, the acknowledged objects of their pastoral care, to be satisfied with them, and not to regard their comparative unworthiness—not to be censorious or uncandid—not to be suspicious of their views and motives—not to exaggerate their faults or scan their

mistakes with an invidious eye; but to put the most charitable construction upon their defects, and to cover with the veil of love, the unavoidable infirmities of our nature, even in its renewed state. The acknowledgment of their integrity; a respectful recognition of their official capacity as Christian ministers; a candid reception of their services in public and private; an adequate remuneration for their time and labour; and a cheerful co-operation with them in the main objects of their commission; are some of those indications of affection and esteem, which faithful ministers may reasonably expect, and without which, they will prosecute their work under painful discouragements and with little success. "Let a man so account of us," says the apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God." To the Thessalonians he says, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." To Timothy he adds, "Let the elders which rule well be accounted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine." To the Hebrews he says, "Obey them that have the rule over you and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." And in several epistles he says, "Brethren pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified."* Thus far then we seem to be agreed.

But when the vicar added, that "the unworthiness of ministers will not prevent their conveying a blessing to devout hearers, any more than Balaam's unworthiness, prevented his conferring a blessing upon the Israelites," the sentiment, I fear, sir, unless greatly qualified, is very erroneous, and in its most obvious sense, would sanction every species of delinquency and guile in the authorized ministers of the Church. If the example adduced had been that of some true prophet or preacher, recognised as such in the Old or New Testament, though a man of like passions and infirmities as ourselves, we should not have put this construction on the term *unworthiness*. The most faithful and exemplary ministers always have been,

* 1 Cor. iv. 1. 1 Thes. v. 12. 1 Tim. v. 17. Heb. xiii. 17.
1 Thes. iii. 1.

and ever will be, the first to acknowledge their own unworthiness; to confess, that after all their labours, they are unprofitable servants; to deplore those errors and infirmities that mar all their engagements; and to declare that if the reward of their services depended upon their own merit, they should experience neither success in this world, nor acceptance at the day of judgment. The idea that a minister's usefulness as the medium of a divine blessing, depends upon his comparative worthiness, or that God grants his blessing to one church for the sake of the minister, and withholds it from another because their minister does not deserve it, will ever be abhorrent to the best feelings of a Christian. It is our consolation to know that the blessings which God confers on his people, are entirely gratuitous, bestowed as free and unmerited favours, without regard to the worthiness of the recipients, or the means and instruments by which he conveys them.

At the same time we know, from the nature of the case, from the history of the Christian Church, from observation and experience, and from the Holy Scriptures, that the comparative success of a Christian minister in every station depends, under God, partly upon the prevailing spirit of the people to whom he ministers, and partly upon the state of his own mind and the manner in which he performs his duties. In "blessing us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ Jesus," God requires on the part of his people a disposition suitable to receive them, and a right use of the means instituted for their communication; while in the instruments and agents he employs to effect his purposes, he requires a moral adaptation for their work. If in all the divine plans in nature and providence we see how remarkably the means and instruments of the divine will are adapted to the ends proposed, it cannot, surely, be less so in the higher economy of grace. And if under the Old Testament, in that imperfect dispensation of forms and ceremonies, the most specific qualifications, personal and moral, were required in the ministers of the sanctuary, it would be monstrous to suppose that such fitness has been entirely overlooked in the more spiritual and heavenly dispensation of the New. St. Paul assures the believers at Ephesus, that "when Christ ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men; and he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying

of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”* Whether we advert to the apostles and evangelists whom our blessed Lord chose at the beginning to be the ambassadors of his kingdom, and on whom he conferred the supernatural gifts of the Spirit; or whether we refer to the apostle of the Gentiles who was afterwards added to their number; we cannot fail to see a beautiful correspondence between the spirit and character of the workmen and their work. And when the miraculous powers of the apostolic age ceased, it was no less proper and even necessary that their successors in the sacred office, in every age and in all parts of the church, should, as much as possible, in all their moral and spiritual endowments, resemble the apostles, and prove themselves to be “good men, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.” Who, indeed, can read the cautions addressed to the first churches, and especially St. Paul’s epistles to Timothy and Titus, without perceiving the vast importance which the apostles attached to the integrity and irreproachableness of the ministerial character. It was their most devout concern that the things which they had taught should be committed to faithful men, who should be able to teach others also; and that all their successors in the sacred office should be an ornament to the Christian cause, “holding fast the form of sound words in faith and love; giving themselves wholly to the work, that their profiting might appear unto all men; studying to show themselves approved unto God, workmen that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth; and being examples to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity.”†

If, then, my dear friend, you should ask me what I conceive to be the proper and essential qualifications of a Christian minister, I might answer in a few words, either in the language of inspiration, or in corresponding terms. A Christian minister must be himself a sincere believer in Christ, and a man of true, personal, experimental, and habitual piety. He must maintain sound doctrine, and preach in accordance with the fundamental truths of the Holy Scriptures. He must possess competent knowledge

* Ephesians iv. 8, 11—13.

† 1 Tim. iii. 1—7. iv. 12—16. vi. 11—14.

2 Tim. i. 13. ii. 2, 15, 23—26. iv. 5.

and ability to discharge his ministerial functions. He must engage in the work from right motives, and a solemn determination, to the utmost of his power, and in humble dependance on divine aid, to perform its duties and bear its trials with fidelity and patience. He must likewise sustain a good character, the virtues of moral rectitude and Christian consistency, that he may have a good report of them that are without, and that his spirit and conduct, in private and public, may attest his sincerity and exemplify the fruits of the Christian faith. While it is an error on the part of private Christians to expect in their pastors that perfection which they themselves have found to be unattainable, or to indulge a fastidiousness in regard to the taste and manners of ministers which they never apply to others; it cannot be denied that the former have fewer temptations to sin, and more helps and incentives to holiness than ordinary Christians; and that if the gospel fail in their case to produce benignity of temper and purity of morals, the failure must either proclaim their hypocrisy, or dishonour their religion. Nor let it be said that by insisting upon these terms we are fixing the standard of ministerial qualification too high, or requiring a degree of excellence not to be attained in the ordinary state of the church. Nothing short of these ought to satisfy any man who wishes to be "a good minister of Jesus Christ," either in the prospect of the work or the permanent discharge of its engagements. Nor can any man who fails to keep this standard in view, and to make it his constant aim, either fulfil the injunctions of sacred writ or hope for acceptance at the final day of account. But when we have done the most we can, and made it our devout concern rather to exceed the standard than to be satisfied with less, we shall still honestly disclaim all pretensions to merit, and feel a deep and humbling sense of our own unworthiness.

But when the learned vicar referred to the example of Balaam, as a proof that a divine blessing is conveyed to devout hearers notwithstanding the minister's unworthiness, I fear he meant to throw the shield of protection, not only over the unavoidable infirmities of good men, but over the avarice, hypocrisy, impious presumption, and scandalous immorality of men like Balaam, provided they rank among the authorized ministers of the Church. As to any blessing being conveyed to the Israelites through the medium of the false prophet Balaam, it is quite surprizing how any such thought could have entered the preacher's mind.

We are told, indeed, that notwithstanding the solicitations of Balak ; notwithstanding the splendid reward he had already received, or was expecting for his services ; notwithstanding the costly sacrifices which he several times caused to be offered, as though he would bribe Jehovah to change his purpose or falsify his word ; he was not permitted to curse Israel, but compelled by a resistless power working upon his own conscience to pronounce them blessed. But he himself did not bless them, nor was he the channel or instrument of a blessing. He was rather desirous, in defiance of his better principles, to gratify the malice of Balak, and to receive the impious reward. Yes, so bent was he upon cursing Israel, and so much did he love the wages of unrighteousness, that by a miraculous interposition, even "the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbad the madness of the prophet." Even the words of truth which fell from his lips while offering sacrifice on the mountain, uttered under that divine power which overawed him, conferred no blessing upon Israel ; but the blessing pronounced in public by the prophet, was soon afterwards by his nefarious counsel and example in private converted into a curse. "For Balaam taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication ;" for the punishment of which "there fell in one day three and twenty thousand."* Thus the unworthiness, or rather depravity of the false prophet, notwithstanding the truth and beauty of his predictions, not only rendered his forced benediction of no avail to the people of God, but occasioned one of the greatest calamities that befel them in the wilderness.

The application of this melancholy fact to faithless and time-serving ministers in the Christian Church, you will perceive, my friend, to be very obvious and alarming. If there be persons, calling themselves ministers of Christ, who hold the doctrine and tread in the steps of Balaam for reward ; if by their own choice, or the designation of others, for filthy lucre, for the sake of a good living, they assume an office for which they have no spiritual fitness or qualification ; if, like him, they love not that God whose service they solemnise, nor that Saviour whom they announce ; if their chief companions are men like Balak, and his idolatrous and licentious courtiers ; if they take the lead,

* Rev. ii. 14. 1 Cor. x. 10, 19. Num. xxii.—xxv. xxxi.

or delight in those vain and frivolous amusements of the ball-room and the theatre, which may be gratifying to the gay and the dissipated, but are utterly repugnant to the self-denial and seriousness requisite in a Christian minister, as well as to his sacred occupations; if the distinguishing features of their character, like Balaam's, are covetousness and spiritual hypocrisy, a rapacious grasping after the emoluments of office, an unprincipled truckling to men in power, yielding to base solicitation for the sake of patronage, and climbing to the high places of the earth, on purpose to curse the humbler tribes of Israel; if they visit the sanctuary chiefly by constraint of office, and when the hours of devotion are over, eagerly resort to the card-table, or to the chase, or to some other favourite sport, as the very element of their being; if beyond the precincts of the Church, in their retired or social hours, they lay aside all pretensions to sanctity, are chargeable with profaneness or intemperance, and appear reckless or indifferent to the interests of religion in themselves and their parishioners; what blessing can they impart to their hearers, or what fruits can be expected from their ministry, but such as sprung up in Israel from the ministry of Balaam? Whatever name such men may bear, or to whatever community they belong, if there be such, (and if not, why institute the comparison) they incur the guilt and the infamy of false prophets, and so far from conveying a blessing to their hearers, are to themselves and to others the instruments of a curse. They may claim the honour of a collegiate education; they may boast of high patronage; they may have been inducted to office by prelatic hands; they may feel all the self-complacency and hauteur of clerical pre-eminence; their parishioners, ignorant and timid, may not lift up their voice in deserved censure, or apply for the deposition of such worthless incumbents, and by sometimes attending as a matter of form, may seem to be satisfied with their character and ministry. But "the sacrifices of the wicked, are an abomination to the Lord!" So far from blessing them, or making them a blessing, the Spirit of God turns away from a combination so unhallowed and revolting, and leaves them to the fatal effects of their own obstinacy and infatuation. The solemn tones of the Liturgy, offered as they must be by such men, like the sacrifice of Balaam, without piety, with polluted hands, and deceitful lips, ascend not to heaven to bring down a blessing, but fall powerless on the people, and speedily and

for ever die. And if they sometimes, in a brief discourse, warn their hearers to repent of their follies and vices, and recommend them to live a virtuous and holy life, the impressions of truth, if felt at all, will soon be effaced by the recollection of facts; precept will be neutralized by example; and the thought will rise in the minds of many, and drop from the lips of some, *Physician, heal thyself!* Nay, in many cases, the voice of serious reproof and cutting sarcasm will break forth suddenly from the common sense of some unlettered and despised villager, and in some sequestered path or lonely hour, will meet the unhappy man when least expected, and fill him with shame and dismay, like the dumb ass speaking with man's voice, which forbade the madness of the prophet.*

If then, my dear friend, you could visit some of those rural and benighted districts, where ministers of this description have been stationed, and in which their lack of service has not been supplied, nor the pernicious effects of their example neutralized, by the labours of some Dissenting or Wesleyan preacher, or by the faithful and efficient ministry of some pious Clergyman in the neighbourhood, you would witness a practical demonstration of these sentiments. In such parishes the great bulk of the people have no sense of personal religion, or even of moral obligation. They are profoundly ignorant of the first and most obvious principles of the gospel; and so far from being always ready to assign the reasons of their faith and hope, they have no knowledge of the matter, but appear wholly indifferent to their immortal interests, addicted to low pleasures and offensive conversation, having in reality "no hope, and without God in the world." Instead of exhibiting those fruits of the Spirit which may be expected to spring from the Christian ministry, when it conveys the blessing of God to devout hearers, the moral state of the population in many such places, even at the present day, (and still more so fifty years back) is but one remove from heathenism, and presents to the Christian spectator a distressing scene of moral desolation and spiritual death. In them is verified the solemn predictions of the apostles Peter and Jude, by whom the prophetic Spirit forewarned the churches of such characters. "For as there were false prophets among the people, even so shall there be false teachers among you. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be reviled. And through covetousness shall they with feigned

* See Note A.

words make merchandize of you ; whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their condemnation slumbereth not. They have forsaken the right way, and have gone astray, following the steps of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness. Woe unto them ! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core.”*

But how different, my dear sir, is the scene, when you turn to those parishes in which the clergy are truly men of God, well-qualified for their office, sensible of their responsibility to God and man ; and whose grand concern is so to live, and so to preach, that “they may both save themselves and those who hear them.” When they are not only assiduous in the discharge of their parochial duties, and careful to maintain an exemplary moral character, like the respected vicar alluded to, but likewise preach the gospel in all its purity and fulness, and cherish among their people, towards good men of all denominations, the mild and generous spirit of Christian charity, they will assuredly be made the means, notwithstanding their unworthiness, of conveying the divine blessing to devout hearers, and will become in many cases, the honoured instruments of their salvation. And they will thus become a blessing to the people, not because they were episcopally ordained, of which the most useless and injurious of their brethren might equally boast ; but because they can say, with the apostle of the Gentiles, “It is Christ in you the hope of glory, whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom ; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”† Happily, there are at the present moment many such districts, where, by the labours of faithful men, the accredited ministers of God, the moral waste has undergone a blessed transformation, and is become like the garden of the Lord. The odious forms of bigotry and dissension, as well as profligacy and impiety, have given place to the presiding power of Christian holiness and Christian love ; while the fruits of the Spirit have sprung up in rich maturity and abundance, producing a state of moral rectitude, devotion, benevolence, harmony, and peace, at the sight of which the preacher might have truly said, “the angels would rejoice.” Nor can I, though a Dissenter, hesitate to express my sin-

* 2 Peter, ii. 1—5. 14.—16. Jude 11.

† Col. i. 21—28.

cere and earnest wish and prayer, in which every true friend of the Established Church and of our common Christianity will join, that every parish in the kingdom were blessed with such a ministry and such a scene !

I must now beg my esteemed friend to proceed with me to the vicar's second and principal assumption, in which he affirmed "that the ministers of his church are the only ministers of God's appointment ; that all other ministers are merely ministers appointed by men ; and that the ministers of the Church are the only ones authorized of God to pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins." From the peculiar prominence given to it, I conclude that the service expressed in the last sentence, is regarded by the reverend gentleman as the most sacred, if not the principal part, of a minister's duty, for the sake of which he has received his commission, and from the due performance of which all unauthorized ministers are excluded. Now, sir, in spite of all my charity, with which I would gladly cover a multitude of venial errors, I am compelled to say that this assumption either expresses one of the grossest errors of popery, avowed by the minister of a protestant church ; or betrays the most confused and inadequate idea of the Christian ministry, as set for the defence of the gospel and the instruction of the world. If by being "authorized of God to pronounce to his people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins," the vicar means that a minister is authorized to do this absolutely and infallibly, in the case of any who may profess repentance—either positively to pronounce the absolution and remission of *their* sins, or to assure them that *their sins in particular* are already pardoned and absolved—then I must be bold to declare in the face of our learned divine, and of the famous university in which he acquired his scholarship, that such a service forms no part whatever of a minister's duty or work, and that any pretension to it, by whomsoever made, whether he be deacon, priest, or bishop, or the pope himself, is a most impious presumption.

We are told by the evangelists, that on one occasion, when a poor man sick of the palsy was brought by his friends into the presence of our Saviour to be cured, "Jesus, seeing their faith, saith to the sick man, Son ! be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."* This language appeared so unusual, and so contrary to any thing ever assumed

* Matt. ix. 1—8. Mark ii. 1—12 Luke v. 18—26.

by Moses and the prophets, that "certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts, said, Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only? And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts? whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, arise, and take up thy bed and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy) I say unto thee, arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way to thine house. And immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all, insomuch, that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." Thus our blessed Saviour repelled the charge of blasphemy, and justified himself in assuming the power to forgive sins, by the miraculous cure of the man to whom he granted the pardon; clearly intimating that if he had not done so, the imputation would have been well-founded. Now if the ministers of the Established Church who claim this high authority, will go and do likewise, attesting their assumption by a miracle; or if, by virtue of their episcopal ordination, God has in fact given them an infallible knowledge of the human heart, the apostolic power of discerning spirits; we will readily concede to them the high prerogative of pronouncing to persons who profess repentance, the absolution and remission of their sins, and will recommend all persons distressed with the burden of conscious guilt, to seek immediate absolution, from these authorized ministers of God. But since no man in his right mind will pretend either to the power of working miracles, or to an infallible discernment of the heart, we must denounce, as monstrous and soul-destructive, the assumed authority of absolutely declaring to any man the remission of his sins. And yet, if this be not the real meaning of the sentence, if the vicar did not mean to insinuate the possession of some such mysterious power, some prerogative peculiar to authorized ministers of the Established Church, why use a phrase so mystical and ambiguous? Nevertheless, I hope and believe, the greater part of his clerical brethren, would at once, with honest indignation, disclaim the assumption of a prerogative which the apostles never assumed, and which Christ alone exercised on earth, and the right use of which requires and asserts the attributes of Deity.

I am aware, my friend, that the language under consideration, is founded on that part of the Liturgy for the visitation of the sick, in which it is said, "The sick person shall be moved to make a special confession of his sins; after which, the priest shall thus absolve him, if he humbly and heartily desire it: *Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: and by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.*" Now, if there be any part of the Liturgy more objectionable than others, it is this. It not only symbolises with popery, and sanctions one of its most unscriptural and pernicious errors, but was obviously retained from the popish mass-book at the Reformation, not because it was approved by the Reformers themselves, but to conciliate the members of the Romish church. But it is perfectly unnecessary to the service of which it forms a part; and, to say the least, is a useless addition to the words of divine truth, quoted in the preceding address. It can do no good to the sick, but, if believed in its most obvious and literal sense, may become the ground of a fatal delusion; while it transforms a Protestant minister into a Popish priest, and puts into his lips a most impious and revolting assumption, at the use of which, one would imagine every well disciplined mind must shudder. This brief assumption in the offices for the visitation of the sick, otherwise so excellent, mars the whole, like "dead flies which cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth an offensive flavour." Unless great latitude be allowed in the use of it, or in the sense in which it is understood, it is truly astonishing how any enlightened clergyman, when about to be ordained, remembering that it forms a part of the Liturgy which he agrees to use, can declare his unfeigned assent and consent to every thing contained in that book. And to many conscientious minds this alone has furnished sufficient reason for not taking orders in a church which compels or expects its ministers to use a form so papistical and delusive. Nor can I doubt, but many excellent ministers now in the Church, have felt, and still feel, it to be a grievous burden to their conscience, over which they have often sighed, earnestly wishing they were well rid of it. But to the worthy vicar, the pronouncing of this absolution to his people, when any are superstitious enough to receive it,

seems to be the very glory of his office, a service in perfect keeping with his views of the Christian faith, and the lofty conceptions he has formed of clerical pre-eminence, a prerogative exclusively possessed by the authorized ministers of his church; proving how nearly he approximates to the church of Rome!

But shrinking from the obvious absurdity and blasphemy of the assumption literally understood, it will be said, my dear sir, that the authority of pronouncing to the people of God the absolution and remission of their sins, is evidently to be qualified by the condition of *their being penitent*; the reality of which in any particular case, the minister presumes not to determine. Why then not abandon a phraseology which plainly conveys a different sentiment, and was so meant to be received? But if the minister disclaims all supernatural discernment or mystic power, and simply means that he is divinely authorized to declare to his people, that *if they are truly penitent*, God will assuredly grant them the remission of their sins; then I will boldly affirm, and easily prove, that no special authority is required for that purpose; that no man can give such authority to another or assume it himself; that God alone can authorize any man to declare or certify such a fact; that he has actually given us this authority in his holy word; and that every person who can read his Bible, has the same right and authority to pronounce to the penitent this most gracious assurance. If there be any parts of the word of God more plain, more simple and unambiguous than others, they are those which declare that "God desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he would turn from his wickedness and live; that he is gracious and long-suffering to us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance; that whosoever repenteth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy; that God is more ready to hear and to pardon than we are to pray; that all mankind are freely invited to come to Christ as the Saviour of the world; and that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."*

It is doubtless the province of a Christian pastor, when addressing persons truly penitent, to pronounce these divine declarations in the most unhesitating and cheering manner. But this he may do, not because he is the

* Isa. lv. 1—7. Ezek. xviii. 23 John iii. 16, 17. 1 Tim. ii. 4. Tit. ii. 11 2 Pet. iii. 9. Rev. xxii. 19.

authorized minister of a particular church, nor because he is a minister at all, but because he finds them in the word of God. This requires neither authority nor learning. It is a part of Scripture which needs no explanation, but which a child may understand and pronounce. It is a portion of Christian truth so essential and so plain, that in rehearsing it, the assistance of an authorized minister might very safely be dispensed with; while in the simple statements of an unlettered Christian or the perusal of Scripture itself, a true penitent may find as speedy relief to his troubled conscience, and as much warrant to hope for the remission of his sins through faith in the Son of God, as though it were pronounced by a regular clergyman or a most reverend bishop. And thus, sir, the mysterious service which we are told the ministers of one church alone are authorized to perform, turns out to be one of the most simple of all transactions, which every man who can read his Bible, may equally perform.

How then can I help concluding that such an announcement on the part of a Christian minister, betrays the most confused and inadequate ideas of the ministerial office, and of that divine economy which he professes to explain! If my friend were to ask me, what are the special duties of the Christian ministry, for which it was first instituted by the Supreme Head of the Church, and is still continued, I might answer in a few sentences, founded on the plain directions of the New Testament. It is the province of a Christian minister, first of all, to preach the gospel in its original simplicity and fulness, including all its facts, its doctrines, its institutions, the evidences of its divine authority, its claims to the obedience of faith, its benevolent design as an economy of redemption, the person and offices of its Divine Author, the necessity of repentance toward God and of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, and the consequences which depend upon its cordial reception. Thus he is bound to explain the mysteries of the kingdom of God, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, "to declare the whole counsel of God, keeping back nothing that may be profitable, but with simplicity and godly sincerity, by manifestation of the truth as it is in Jesus, commending himself to every man's conscience, as in the sight of God, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear." Being set for the defence of the gospel, it is the province of Christian ministers as far as possible, to answer the objections, and silence the cavils of unbelievers, to rectify

the errors of the mistaken, to instruct their disciples in the first principles of the oracles of God, and then in its deeper mysteries, that "they may know the certainty of those things in which they have been instructed, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear." It is their duty likewise to conduct the solemnities of public worship; to administer the peculiar ordinances of our holy religion; to superintend the order and discipline of the church; to discharge in their respective stations, from house to house, all the offices of pastoral visitation and counsel; and to take the lead in plans of public benevolence and Christian zeal, for the best interests of their own charge, and the general prosperity of the churches.* But if such are the duties of a Christian minister, the circumstance of "pronouncing to God's people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins," in the only sense in which it is admissible at all, is but a minor part of one branch of those duties, and that too wherein he can have no authority but that which the Scriptures have given to every Christian. And yet this is put forward in a pompous and mystic form of words, as though it were the grand work for which the ministers of the Episcopal Church have been honoured with a divine commission.

Such vague and inadequate views of the ministerial office, entertained by ministers themselves, would in any community be truly lamentable and astonishing, both on their own account, and for the people of their charge; but pre-eminently so when entertained by the members of our most ancient and celebrated university, and the ministers of a church which assumes to be the purest and most apostolic in Christendom, and whose clergy style themselves, the only authorized ministers of God! But a man may be, at the same time, a good scholar but a sorry divine. He may have made great proficiency in general science, and in classical and mathematical learning, and may have borne away the honours of distinguished scholarship; and yet be so ignorant of the sublimer science of the gospel, that one "need to teach him again which be the first principles of the oracles of God."† But the former, however valuable, and however subservient, when properly applied,

* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. Acts x. 42. xx. 20, 21. xxvi. 16—18.

1 Cor. ii. iii. 2 Cor. iv. 12. 2 Tim. iv. 1—5.

† Heb. v. 12.

to ministerial eminence and success, can never, without the latter, qualify a Christian minister for his work. If in the ministers of religion there were no alternative between a sound theological education with moderate attainments in science and learning, and a profound scholarship with a scanty knowledge of the gospel, no person who understands the genius of Christianity, and the vital interests of the church of Christ, would hesitate to prefer the former. In fact, how many are there in various communions, as there were in the first ages of the church, who make no pretensions to learning, but like the unlettered fishermen of Galilee, are despised, perhaps, for their illiteracy, whose knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and of theology in all its branches, is unspeakably more accurate and extensive, and who are infinitely better qualified "to shew unto men the way of salvation," than a greater number of those who have passed the terms, and even won the literary honours of a university! We wish to see both combined in the ministers of religion. But, when the possession of one, with manifest destitution of the other, is deemed a sufficient proof of ministerial competence and clerical superiority, it cannot but excite disgust. Nor shall the boldness of these assumptions silence our rebuke, since it too plainly indicates a superficial mind, unacquainted with the science in which it arrogates exclusive authority; and thus verifies the saying, that ignorance and conceit are twin brothers.

We come now, my friend, to the grand assumption of all, in which the vicar excommunicates all others from the Christian ministry, and affirms the ministers of his own Church are the only ministers of God. If we ask, on what ground this assertion rests, we are furnished with an explicit answer in his own case, which was of course intended to illustrate a general principle. "For I," said he, "am a minister of God; and if asked how I received my commission, I should say, from the bishop; that bishop received his authority from another, and so on back to the time of the apostles." Thus then, you perceive, the exclusive honour of the clergy, as the only authorized ministers of God, is made to depend on the mystic form of episcopal ordination, like a magnificent edifice resting on a solitary and slender pillar: but let us look and see whether it be so or not.

The feebleness of this ground will sufficiently appear, if it be remembered, that ordination to the Christian ministry,

however performed, cannot impart, nor was ever meant to impart, any special virtue or authority; but is simply a form of designation to the sacred office for the sake of order, and gives to those who receive it an acknowledged right to exercise their ministry in that church by which the order is recognised. I presume it will readily be conceded that no person can transfer or communicate to another any authority unless he be first possessed of it himself, with a right to make the transfer at his discretion. It will also be admitted that all spiritual authority is of God; that Christ alone, as supreme head of his church, communicates gifts and powers to his servants; and that whatever authority bishops may either possess or convey, it has been derived from the same source, and committed to them by the Lord of all, for the accomplishment of his purposes, and the prosperity of his kingdom. We may of course say in this, as in all other cases, "No man can receive anything except it be given him from above; and that no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron: for even Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee."*

Now, as all the natural powers and social prerogatives which God has conferred on man are given to be exercised in accordance with the laws of nature and the constitution of society; so the special powers and endowments which he grants to his servants in the economy of grace, must be given for specific uses, and limited in their exercise by clear and determined laws. In the supernatural endowments possessed by the prophets and apostles, there was nothing vague or indefinite, nothing arbitrary or uncertain, the issues of which depended on the caprice of the possessor; but they were governed by the divine impulse itself, in subservience to the specific purposes of their bestowment. Of Christ alone it is said, that the Father gave not the Spirit by measure unto him; clearly asserting his peculiar and unbounded powers, by virtue of which he could say, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work: for as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will."† But the powers granted to his servants are all limited in their nature, and specific in their use. To the apostles our Lord granted absolute authority in his church, the authority of

* John iii. 27. Heb. v. 4, 5. † John iii. 34. v. 17, 21.

ambassadors and of judges; and endowed them with supernatural gifts to attest their authority, and to insure the faithful and infallible execution of their commission. Some portion of that authority and of those powers was absolutely restricted to themselves, and ceased with the termination of their labours; while they were empowered to communicate a part to others, for the immediate or ultimate interests of the church. In some cases, by the laying on of the apostles' hands, they conferred the supernatural gifts of the Spirit, ability to speak in divers tongues and to work miracles. And these powers were conferred not only on evangelists and pastors, but sometimes on a multitude of private Christians; as in the church at Samaria, the family of Cornelius, the disciples whom St. Paul first met with at Ephesus, and the Christian church at Corinth.* Hence miraculous gifts, in all their variety and splendour, so much abounded in the first churches, and presented to the friends and enemies of Christ such visible and commanding demonstrations of his divine power. But the power thus conferred by the hands of the apostles was not transferrable to others, but lived and died with those who had received it. Simon the sorcerer, it is true, fancied that the apostles imparted to others, power and authority equal to their own, and therefore said "Give me this power also, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."† But his notion of the gift was as false, as his motive in seeking it was base. To perform miracles—to discern spirits,—to speak with tongues,—and to utter prophecies, were special gifts of the Holy Spirit, exercised by many in the primitive churches, in common with the apostles; granted so largely for important purposes in the infancy of the church, till the divinity of the gospel was sufficiently attested, and the volume of the New Testament completed for the direction of our faith. But to confer these divine powers by imposition of hands, was exclusively the attribute of an apostle, the distinctive and incommunicable mark of apostolic authority. Hence, the possession of miraculous gifts gradually declined in the churches, as the apostles and their immediate followers were removed; and entirely ceased about the middle of the second century, with the death of the last persons to whom the gift had been imparted by the apostle John. Admit this position,

* Acts viii. 13—23. x. 44. xix. 1—6. 1 Cor. xii. 4—11.

xiv. 26—33. † Acts viii. 19.

and all is plain and intelligible; deny it, and the history of the apostolic age is involved in confusion and darkness.

On other occasions, the apostles, by imposition of hands, ordained elders and deacons in the several churches, and thus gave them an official right, with limited power, to exercise their ministry in the church by which they were chosen, or in some specific province, or wherever divine Providence might call them. Thus we are told in the sixth chapter of the Acts, that seven deacons were ordained over the church at Jerusalem, for the specific purpose of taking care of the poor; although Stephen, Philip, and others of them afterwards, bore the office of preachers and evangelists. Similar authority was doubtless exercised by the apostles on many other occasions, in the organization of the first churches, and the appointment of bishops and deacons. Thus St. Paul appointed Timothy and Titus to preside over the churches at Ephesus, Crete, and other provinces, while he himself was prosecuting his work in remoter districts,—“to ordain them elders in every place,”—and to set things in order according to his instructions. But the authority with which he thus invested Timothy and Titus was evidently specific in its purpose, limited in its extent, and not transferrable. It was an authority delegated to themselves, a special and extraordinary authority, which ceased when the commission was fulfilled, or when the person who received it had finished his course. And as an ambassador may resign his embassy to the king, but cannot transfer it to whom he will; or as a delegate or representative may give up his appointment to his constituents, but cannot authorize another to take his place; so Timothy and Titus might have resigned their commission to the apostle who gave it, but had no power to invest others with the same authority. I conclude, therefore, that the supreme authority of the apostles in the regulation of the Christian church, whether official or miraculous, terminated with themselves, and the parties on whom they conferred it.

Let us, however, for a moment suppose, that the continuance of the same authority in superintending the affairs of the church, to be transmitted from the apostles to Christian bishops in regular succession till the end of time,—was the plan actually chosen by Christ as the Head of the church, and clearly established at the beginning. Now in the institution of such a system as the grand and exclusive means of human salvation, it must have been his divine

will and care that no chasm should take place in the transmission of this sacred power, lest by any accident it should be lost to the churches; and that all persons successively invested with it, should, at the same time, be endued with virtue and wisdom sufficient to insure its faithful and unerring exercise. But, for this purpose, every bishop in the long line of succession must possess an infallible discernment, in reference to all who desire the sacred office, so as to distinguish those who are from those who are *not* moved by the Holy Spirit; and such perfection of moral feeling, such rectitude of mind in the discharge of his high functions, as to admit the right persons, and the right persons only, without partiality or prejudice, passion, interest, or caprice. If not, by the ordination of improper persons, the bishop may give a divine sanction to false prophets, like Balaam, and declare those to be authorized ministers of God whom the Lord himself regards as his enemies. Or, by rejecting others whom the Lord has called to his service, and whom he intends to honour as the instruments of his glory, he will either impose on them the necessity of being silent, in defiance of the divine purpose, the powerful impulse of the Holy Spirit, and the calls of his providence; or will compel them to exercise their ministry without ordination, in some irregular community, stigmatized as intruders into the sacred office, or merely the ministers of men. If our English bishops do then in reality possess these apostolic attributes, so essential to the transmission of divine authority, we will thankfully submit our wishes and the intimations we have had of a divine call, to their infallible decision, as the vicegerents of God. But since the history and present state of the Established Church, not to say common sense and common modesty, will compel each of their lordships to say, this prerogative is not in me! I disclaim all such pretensions!—the pillar of their apostolic authority is gone, and the mighty fabric built upon it tumbles into ruins.

But allowing the utmost importance to ordination as an apostolic usage which ought to be retained, still you will find, my dear friend, we have as much proof in the New Testament in favour of Presbyterian, as our opponents can bring in support of Episcopal ordination, and we must, therefore, at least deny the exclusive validity of the latter. It is worthy of remark, that the apostles were not ambitious of great names and lofty distinctions, and have not applied

to themselves any high-sounding titles, but those only which are appropriate and expressive, at once indicating their responsibility and their work. As their divine Lord had carefully suppressed the first risings of ambition, and cautioned them against all attempts to domineer, or to seek pre-eminence, and had impressed upon them this interesting and momentous fact, *All ye are brethren*; so they, in all their apostolic intercourse, cherished and evinced the most cordial respect for each other's rights and feelings, and proceeded on the principle of fraternal co-operation and ministerial equality. And although, for the sake of order in their public meetings, one apostle necessarily took the presidency, as when the apostle James presided at the grand council held at Jerusalem respecting the question of imposing circumcision on the Gentile converts;* yet he assumed no superiority on that account, but as an equal presiding among his equals, he took their votes and declared their decision. Nor were they less concerned, by precept and example, to nourish the same amiable spirit in all the churches, frequently urging upon their office-bearers the same excellent injunctions. The successors of the apostles are therefore called by the general term Ministers, because they profess to be the Lord's servants, ministering to his churches in holy things. Because it is their business spiritually to lead, protect, and feed the people of their charge, as a shepherd doth his flock, they are called Pastors or Shepherds; while Christ himself is styled, the Shepherd and Bishop of souls. To denote their seniority, or the gravity of their character and office, they are denominated Presbyters or Elders; and this title is applied indiscriminately to all persons sustaining any office or discharging any public duty in the Christian church, whether pastors, teachers, or elders, and even to the apostles themselves.† Because they are charged with the inspection, oversight, or superintendence of their respective churches, both as to doctrine and manners, for their personal salvation and collective welfare, they are styled Bishops, from the Greek word, *Episcopos*, which signifies an inspector, overseer, president, guardian, superintendent. This title is used in the New Testament, not to denote a superior order of ministers, invested with apostolic authority over their brethren, but is applied indifferently to all persons intrusted with ministerial authority in the primitive churches, at other

* Acts xv. 6—31. † 1 Peter v. 6. ii. ²

times called pastors, teachers, or elders; and it is also applied by way of excellence to Christ himself, because to him pre-eminently belongs the oversight and government of all the churches. Hence St. Paul begins his epistle to the Philippians in these words, "To all the saints which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons;" shewing most clearly that all the office-bearers in that church, large as it most probably was, were comprised in these two classes. In writing to Timothy, he says, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work."* And he then proceeds to describe the manner in which bishops and deacons must discharge their several duties, and the virtues by which each class should be distinguished; showing beyond all contradiction, that only these two orders of ministers were instituted by the apostles, and that the term *bishop* is but another name for the pastors or elders whom Paul sent Timothy to ordain in every church, and to furnish with suitable apostolic instructions. When, moreover, Paul arrived at Miletus, in his way to Jerusalem, and from thence "sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church," among other excellent counsels delivered on that occasion, he said to them, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers or *bishops*, to feed the church of the Lord, which he hath purchased with his own blood."† Thus, you see, my friend, the same persons styled elders in one verse, are called bishops in the other, shewing that both titles were used interchangeably, as the connection might require, and denote the same order of ministers in the apostolic churches. And in confirmation of the fact, to make certainty doubly sure, we may adduce the language of the apostle Peter, in which he applies to himself and others these several titles indifferently, as the common and appropriate designation of all the ministers of Christ. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight, (acting as bishops,) not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."‡

* 1 Tim. iii. 1. † Acts xx. 17—28. ‡ 1 Peter v. 1—4.

If, then, we examine all the instances in which ordination is mentioned in the New Testament, we shall find it invariably performed, not by the authority or at the discretion of one apostle, bishop, or elder only, but by the apostles and elders collectively; one presiding on the occasion, at the request or with the concurrence of the whole church. The Greek term *cheirotonesantes*, having ordained, as the learned vicar well knows, signifies stretching out or raising the hand as in voting, and is used to denote the public recognition of a person's appointment to some office by the suffrages of the people, or by shew of hands, as in a popular assembly. Hence, when the apostles before the day of Pentecost, thought it their duty to fill up the vacancy in the apostleship occasioned by the treachery and death of Judas, they did not themselves choose or nominate a successor, but the hundred and twenty disciples assembled on the occasion appointed two, namely, Justus and Matthias; whereupon, having prayed for divine direction, the choice was determined by lot or ballot: "and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."* Then in the appointment of seven deacons in the church at Jerusalem, to take charge of its temporal affairs, the twelve did not make the selection themselves, but called together the multitude of the disciples, and said, "It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you, seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word."† And the whole multitude, pleased with the advice, selected seven men of high reputation in the church, whom they set before the apostles for their approval. "And having prayed, they laid their hands on them:" a significant form generally used on such occasions, as well as in the communication of miraculous powers. Not because it had any intrinsic virtue or mysterious effect, nor because it necessarily conveyed supernatural gifts or apostolic authority: which was not always the case even when used by the apostles, much less when continued by their uninspired successors. But the laying on of hands appears to have been used by the apostles, in the case of these seven deacons, and may be so used without any vain assumption by their successors in the Christian

* Acts i. 15—26. † Acts vi. 1—6.

ministry, *simply to denote by a visible and expressive sign, the solemn designation of the persons chosen to their office, and the earnest prayer of the officiating elders, that God may graciously grant them all needful endowments.*

When, in like manner, Paul and Barnabas, during their stay at Antioch, were ordained on a special mission to the heathen, (the only ordination by the way which those apostles appear to have received from men,) the service was not performed by some metropolitan bishop or apostle, but by the whole company of prophets and teachers then at Antioch. "For as they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Paul for the work whereunto I have called them." And when the prophets and teachers to whom the divine injunction was given "had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away:"* much in the same manner as Christian Missionaries are now ordained in our churches. In the following chapter we are informed that when these apostles had preached the gospel in the city of Derbe, "and had taught many, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them unto the Lord in whom they believed."† Here it is not said that the elders thus ordained in every church, were first chosen by shew of hands on the part of the disciples, or that the two apostles performed the service jointly with other ministers; but from the meaning of the term itself, and from the usage so clearly adopted in other cases, there can be no rational ground to doubt the fact. St. Paul, in his first epistle to Timothy, says, "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, *with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*" In his second epistle he adds, "Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee *by the putting on of my hands.*"‡ Assuming both these to be correct, as the necessary consequence of the apostle's inspiration, we conclude that while St. Paul presided at the ordination of his friend Timothy, and offered the ordaining prayer, he was assisted by the presbytery or company of pastors then present, who joined him in the imposition of hands.

* Acts xiii. 1—4. † Acts xiv. 21—23. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6

Thus we have before us the proper form of apostolic ordination, as obvious as though we had been present on the occasion. Whether it is most resembled by the form used in the Church of England, where the bishop alone ordains whom he thinks proper, without any regard to the people's choice; or by the form adopted by ministers of the presbyterian and congregational order, who ordain or publicly designate to the sacred office, such only as the churches have previously chosen; we may leave to be decided by those who have witnessed both, and compared them with the apostolic precedents. And if any shall deem it more dignified and imposing to be ordained by a modern bishop, with all the pomp and consequence of prelatical authority; we, unhesitatingly, prefer a form which retains the decorum and solemnity of both, and approximates as nearly as possible to the primitive model. When a body of Christian ministers, holding the same faith and order, assemble for the ordination of a junior brother, one of them, and for the most part a senior pastor of some standing, necessarily presides on the occasion, and offers the ordaining prayer, and thus becomes, in the primitive sense of the term, a *bishop*, a presiding elder or superintendent; so that we are, in effect, episcopally ordained, "with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery." But, what is of infinitely greater moment than any formulary, by this method we respect and maintain the inalienable right of the church to elect its own pastors and deacons, and the official equality of all Christian ministers, bound to each other by the same reciprocal bonds, and subject alone to the supremacy of Christ: thus inscribing over our assemblies this grand maxim of the church universal, **BE NOT YE CALLED MASTER, or *Spiritual Lord*; FOR ONE IS YOUR MASTER, EVEN CHRIST, AND ALL YE ARE BRETHREN.**

If the preference were thus given to presbyterian ordination, merely by a few factious and discontented spirits, who dislike the restraints of order and of law, and are prone to speak evil of dignities, or to whom the yoke of episcopal domination had become intolerable, the abettors of episcopacy might plead the necessity of order and decorum in the Christian church, and assert the more legitimate authority of its ministers. But the sentiment has been adopted by multitudes after the maturest investigation, simply because they believed, and still believe it to be most consistent with apostolic precedent, and with the primitive constitution and discipline of the churches; most in ac-

cordance with the genius and spirit of the New Testament economy; most calculated to rescue or preserve the church from spiritual despotism and clerical degeneracy, and to secure its purity both in doctrine and discipline; and therefore most likely, under God, to promote the grand moral and eternal purposes for which Christianity itself was instituted. This conclusion has been formed by men every way qualified to judge rightly respecting it; by men of the most eminent piety, learning, humility, moderation, and candour; by men who could have no ends to serve by such decision, no motive to influence the judgment, but a regard for the interests of truth, and the supreme authority of the holy scriptures. It was the opinion of many distinguished men at the time of the Reformation, in most of the Reformed churches at home and abroad. It is still the deliberate conviction of the Presbyterians in Scotland, not to mention the various bodies of Dissenters in England, most of the Protestants on the Continent, and nearly all the American churches. When therefore, in the face of all these facts and considerations, the ministers of one community will so boldly dogmatize on the exclusive authority of episcopal ordination, we scarcely know which most to wonder at, their want of modesty, or their want of instruction.

But if it could be proved, as well as asserted, that episcopacy is the form of church government divinely instituted in the New Testament, the transmission of that authority, through a regular succession of bishops, from the apostles to the mitred prelates of the English church, as a matter of historic record, is a most groundless assumption.—I must be so candid, my friend, as to acknowledge that traces of episcopacy may be found in the primitive churches, at a very early period, even before the commencement of the second century, from which its apostolic appointment or sanction has been plausibly inferred. The term *bishop*, which, as we have shown, was at first given to all Christian pastors to denote the oversight of their respective flocks, was afterwards used in a more restricted sense, to designate the superintendent of several congregations and ministers in the same vicinity. When the disciples were greatly multiplied in the larger towns and cities, amounting to many thousands, as in Jerusalem, they were of course obliged to meet for divine worship in various places, and required a plurality of elders or teachers to officiate in the several congregations; while they still

considered themselves as forming but one church, one community, bound together by the same divine laws and spiritual interests. The senior elder, by whose efforts in any place they were so increased and organized, was naturally expected to preside at their public or general meetings, and to keep a watchful superintendency and paternal inspection over the whole body; like the superintendent of a Wesleyan circuit; or a congregational minister presiding over several churches raised by his exertions in a populous district; or a venerable and aged missionary, preserving the oversight of several churches, gathered by his labours among the heathen. Hence the senior pastors, charged with the general oversight of several congregations in the same neighbourhood, by virtue of that presidency, came to be denominated superintendents or *bishops*; and the presidency which thus arose in the natural course of things from the respect inspired by age, talent, piety, and successful effort, especially in the case of apostolic men, was gradually confirmed by custom, till it became the recognized order and constitution of the Christian church. Thus episcopacy rose by degrees in the larger towns and cities, and afterwards in rural districts, till the bishops by their number and influence, appeared as a distinct order in the Christian ministry, officially superior to elders.

But for a long period, in the purest and best ages of the church, this form of episcopacy left the liberties of the people, and the independence of their ministers, unimpaired. It was still the presidency of a senior among his brethren, assuming no power, claiming no honours, but those which were due to his experience and talent, to his pre-eminent piety and zeal, the success of his ministry, and the grateful remembrance of his past labours, his sacrifices, his fidelity, and his trials. It was a very different thing from the prelacy of the Church of England, whose bishops, instead of resembling those of the first ages, are seen moving in the high places of the earth, with all the worldly pomp and power of Lords Spiritual in Parliament assembled. So far from observing the apostle's injunction, "not to be lords over God's heritage," these modern bishops have assumed the forbidden title, and exercised over their brethren, a pre-eminence and domination which the apostles would have denounced as most antichristian, and from which the primitive bishops would have shrunk with dismay. On this ground alone we might well decline the

honour of being authorized to preach the gospel by the imposition of their Lordships' hands; and are justified in relieving ourselves from a yoke so antichristian and oppressive, by peacefully withdrawing from their communion.

As to tracing the transmission of this high authority through an unbroken succession of bishops from the apostles until now, it is too ridiculous, and demands a credulity too childish, to deserve a moment's consideration. Every person at all conversant with ecclesiastical history, and disposed to judge righteous judgment, to examine conflicting testimonies, and to estimate facts and opinions without prepossession or prejudice, will scorn the notion of apostolic descent, by whomsoever professed, as one of the most contemptible of all legends; the pretence or belief of which requires a species of selfishness or mental imbecility, which I cannot allow myself properly to designate. When, dear sir, you look at the many chasms found in this long series of apostolic succession; the means by which many, even in early times, rose to the episcopate; the foul characters of some who have held the office, and through whom the sacred authority must have flowed;—when you look at the misdoings which have been planned and executed by mitred dignitaries, deeds of cruelty and darkness; the corruption of doctrine and discipline which, during the long night of the dark ages, increased and swelled in the Christian church, and ripened even to putrescence, under the tutelage of such apostolic bishops, till a divine system, fraught with heavenly blessings to the world, was transformed by its corruption and abuse into one unmitigated and wide-spreading curse;—and when you look at all the changes political and ecclesiastical, all the secularity, ambition, avarice, intrigue, and worldly sycophancy, which have marked the history and still distinguish the movements of mitred prelates, whether in the hierarchy of Rome or of Britain; it must be confessed, that to expect the purity of apostolic succession through such a medium, would be like seeking the pure water which has just fallen from the clouds, when it flows into the Thames through the common sewers of the Metropolis. The element is doubtless there; but as it must be well filtered before it can regain its native purity; so must the virtue and authority conveyed to the clergy by apostolic succession pass through the alembic of a thorough reform, before we can allow it to be pure and apostolical. At all events, this boasted authority, if it exist at all, must have been received

by our English bishops from the Church of Rome, so justly styled in the Apocalypse, "the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth."* And if the episcopate, with its princely emoluments, both sprung from the same honourable source, be indeed sacred and apostolical, "combining the odour of sanctity with the sweets of rapine," as recently and felicitously expressed by one of its own prebends;† we, who neither regard the authority nor envy the wealth, would congratulate the clergy upon their exclusive honours, and wish their church the undisturbed possession of her prelatical authority and immaculate descent.

But if she does in fact possess such authority, it must, of course, exist in the church of Rome in a still higher degree, and with a previous and more ancient claim. Hence the ministers of that community profess to believe, as among the fundamentals of her constitution, "that the church which holds communion with the see of Rome, is the only church Christ has established on earth, being essentially one, holy, catholic, and apostolical; that the bishop of Rome, as successor to St. Peter, always has been, and is at present, the supreme Head of this Church, the source and infallible guardian of all spiritual authority and power; and that all such traditions, both of faith and morals, as were delivered by Christ to his apostles, including the seven sacraments, one of which is the ordination of its priesthood as the only authorized ministers of God, have been faithfully preserved by a constant succession of bishops in the catholic church."* Thus we find the very quintessence of popery asserted by the minister of a Protestant church, and maintained, if at all, upon the same ground, and by the same arguments. These assumptions might do for the meridian of Rome, or for those regions where that mass of error and imposture, properly styled popery, still, like a fatal incubus, paralyses the human mind, and holds its deluded victims in abject superstition and credulity. They would have befitted the lips of a Romish priest in the twelfth century; and, accompanied with corresponding sanctity and zeal, might have given him a niche among the favourite saints then canonized, if not the chance of honourable preferment near the triple crown. But the utterance of such assumptions in a

* Rev. xvii. 5. † Rev. Sydney Smith.

* "State of the English Catholics:" a work by the Rev. J. Berrington, a Romish priest of considerable talent and celebrity.

Protestant church, at the present day, within the Metropolitan see of "the purest and most apostolic church in Christendom," is too bad; and must bring upon the person who avows them, the suspicion of being a papist in disguise, or the charge of schism in separating from the church of Rome without just cause; since, upon his own principles, her peculiar and fundamental dogmas must be right, while her bishops stand first in the order of apostolic succession, and her priesthood, by parity of reason, are the only authorized ministers of God.

It is, however, my dear friend, cheering to know that there are hundreds of enlightened and conscientious ministers in the Church of England, by whom these witless assumptions will be repudiated with as little hesitation as by ourselves. The noble sentiments so intrepidly advanced by Bishop Hoadly in his Bangorian controversy, in which, amidst the frowns of his mitred brethren, he gained to himself immortal honour, as the champion of Christian liberty and a spiritual church, have not perished in the tomb of their author, but have been, and still are, cherished and echoed, even within the precincts of the Church, by many of her most enlightened and devoted members. While they approve the basis of her constitution, and deem it their duty to continue in her communion, and to officiate in her sanctuaries, they are not blind to her manifold defects and abuses, but would gladly see the arrogant assumptions under review, with all other relics of popery, swept away from her forms, that she might become in reality, what her eulogists now vainly assume, the purest and most apostolic of the Reformed churches. These sentiments have been embodied and expressed in terms the most explicit and convincing, in the numerous plans of Church Reform recently published, wherein the abuses of the present system, and the necessity of thoroughly reforming its temporalities and its discipline, have been pointed out by many excellent members of the Church, both lay and clerical, in language more undisguised and severe, than was ever used by her dissenting assailants. And as the public mind becomes more enlightened, these sentiments will gain ground; and their supporters, in all parts of the kingdom, will multiply and combine their forces, till their best wishes and plans have been brought to a glorious and happy consummation. Persons of the same mind as the worthy vicar, who think the system works well as it is, and who wish to keep things

as they are, holding as sacred all those abuses of a feudal age which still encumber the hierarchy, will, doubtless, make every possible effort to stop the march of improvement, if they cannot move the course of time a few degrees back. But the current of public opinion, both within and without the pale of the national church, steady and irresistible, like some mighty current of the tropics which no human power can turn, has now set in against them, and will assuredly prevail, till all these antiquated prejudices have disappeared, "like the chaff of the summer's threshing floor which the wind driveth away."*

Having thus shewn you, my dear sir, how groundless and unscriptural are these assumptions, I must proceed a step further, and declare them to be uncharitable and pernicious. When the vicar affirms "that the ministers of his church are the only ministers of God's appointment, and that all other ministers are merely the ministers of men," he in effect denies the validity of Christian ordinances as administered in all other churches, and virtually excommunicates those churches and their ministers from the pale of the church universal. In this sweeping sentence are included, not only Dissenting ministers of all denominations in this country, and preachers of the Wesleyan body, but also the ministers of the kirk of Scotland, not being episcopally ordained, though by law established; with the greater part of the Reformed churches on the Continent, and nineteen-twentieths of those who preach the gospel in America. Thus, by claiming for the ministers of his own privileged communion, the exclusive possession of apostolic authority, he unchurches the greater part of Christendom; save and except, of course, the venerable parent of our English hierarchy, the church of Rome!

But judging charitably, my friend will say, perhaps the good man did not in reality mean so. Perhaps not: but as this is the natural and obvious sense of the language, I must assume that to be the fact; and have no hesitation in declaring such assumptions to be exceedingly uncharitable, antichristian, and pernicious; the very essence of a sectarian spirit, and pre-eminently schismatical to the rest of the Christian world. Such sentiments are very injurious to those who cherish them, inflating the mind with arrogance and vain-conceit; chilling all the generous and expansive feelings of Christian love; preventing or de-

* See Note B.

stroying the meekness and gentleness of Christ in the character of his ministers; and blending with the pride of aristocracy, and the affectation of high connexions, the fancied sacredness of a divine commission, and the repulsive hauteur of clerical superiority. Such assumptions are offensive to those against whom they are entertained, and prove an insuperable barrier to Christian fellowship. Excommunicated by the clergy of a privileged church; branded by them as ministers of men, intruders into the sacred office, pretending to holy orders, unauthorized of God; what can other ministers and their churches feel, but those emotions of honest indignation and disgust which injustice and unmerited contempt generally inspire. All attempts to draw ministers and churches more closely together, are scornfully repelled, and nothing remains but the din of local strife, or the cold indifference and dumb intercourse of aliens. Hence the Christian church is now literally *a church militant*: but its different companies, instead of conducting themselves as so many divisions in the army of the faithful, always ready under the great Captain of salvation, to combine their forces against the common foe; rather expend their energies in mutual conflict, like combatants in a civil war, and exhibit to the world the sad spectacle of ecclesiastical contention and strife, carried on, like a ferocious combat, with determined obstinacy and spite, in the dominions of the Prince of Peace. Thus schisms are perpetuated in the Christian church by the uncharitable assumptions of the clergy, doing more injury to the Christian cause than its bitterest revilers, and rending asunder, so to speak, that seamless robe which even the Roman soldiers kept entire. Doubtless, any person, as a man and a member of a free state, has a right, if he wishes to play the Ishmaelite, to put forth these offensive assumptions. But he cannot do so as a Christian, if he would have the same mind that was in Christ Jesus; and, by respecting the rights and cherishing the esteem of his fellow disciples, would "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

The uncharitableness of this assumption will appear still more striking, my friend, if we advert, for a moment, to the character and labours of the men thus excommunicated from the ministry of God, and declared to be merely the ministers of men. I will not refer to the clergy of the Scottish Church, or of the Reformed Churches on the continent of Europe and in America; but will confine my

attention to the Dissenters and Methodists at home, against whom, I suppose, the sentence of exclusion was principally intended. To the zealous and disinterested labours of these denominations during the last seventy or eighty years, Great Britain is now mainly indebted for her successful stand against the inroads of infidelity and atheism, which, during the same period, spread like a torrent over the continent, and plunged France into anarchy and blood. To them is she indebted for a large portion of the serious piety and practical religion now prevailing among the middle and lower classes, especially in districts of vast and increasing population. And to them does she owe the origin and prosperity of those truly christian institutions, the School, Bible, Tract, and Missionary Societies, which are the glory of the present age, and promise to be a rich inheritance to the next. True it is, the Church of England, by the labours of many of her pious and exemplary ministers, and by the zeal and liberality of distinguished laymen, has done much towards securing to the nation these signal advantages. But in thus conceding to the Church her due share of praise, let me ask my friend, to what must we trace these laudable exertions, and the present greatly improved and efficient state of her ministry, but to the eccentric labours of Whitfield, Wesley, and their coadjutors, which roused her from a profound sleep, a perfect lethargy, and constrained her to awake and put on strength? To what must we trace the progress of these exertions, these internal amendments of the Church, but to the continued efforts and vast increase of the Methodists and Dissenters, which compelled her members to continue moving in their own defence, and from motives of jealousy and fear, to introduce novel plans and institutions, which are now the most efficient parts of her moral machinery? The Church of England herself, therefore, instead of scowling upon the Dissenters as her enemies, or branding their ministers as men unauthorized of God, ought rather to regard them with grateful remembrance, as the instruments of her renovation and future steadfastness. But the labours of these unauthorized teachers have, in their respective circles, experienced eminent success, the fruits of which pervade the kingdom. Though looked upon with scorn by the hierarchy, and condemned as merely the ministers of men, they have been, and still are, honoured of God. The Spirit of heavenly truth has impressed upon their ministry the deep and indelible seal of a divine sanction.

While hundreds of their haughty despisers, who boasted of their apostolic order, have lived in vain, and gone down from their incumbencies, unlamented, to the oblivion of the grave; many of these unauthorized preachers have been the instruments of "leading many sons unto glory,"—have stayed the plague of sin which was spreading its fearful ravages,—have gained a place in the warm affections of thousands benefited by their labours,—and when their course is finished, will be had in everlasting remembrance. And what is infinitely superior to all the honours and emoluments of prelacy, "their record is in heaven, and their reward on high; and having turned many to righteousness, they will shine as the stars for ever and ever." With these facts in view, therefore, I must again say, the exclusion of such men from the esteem due to the faithful and acknowledged servants of the living God, is not only uncandid and uncharitable, but positively sinful and pernicious.

When, moreover, we turn to the existing state of society, and see what necessity there is for renewed and combined exertion on the part of Christian ministers, the indulgence of this exclusive spirit by the clergy, is the more to be condemned and deplored. Notwithstanding all our Sunday and day schools for giving a scriptural education to the infant poor; notwithstanding the liberal circulation of bibles and tracts for the encouragement of useful reading in every vicinity; notwithstanding the increase of churches and chapels in every district to meet the increase of the population, besides the multiplying of public services, on the sabbath, and on other occasions, both within and without the pale of the Establishment; notwithstanding the labours of itinerants, supported by various denominations, with the local and domiciliary instructions of stated ministers in their several spheres; notwithstanding these, and all other auxiliary means now and for years past in active operation, for the moral and spiritual welfare of the community; what a mass of moral evil every where still presents itself to our view, even in places of scanty population, where there are fewer incentives to crime, and fewer means of concealment. A lamentable destitution of religious knowledge; a feeble sense of moral obligation between man and man; constant profanation of the sabbath; irreligion, infidelity, practical atheism, and the scornful rejection of all sacred authority, sometimes unblushingly avowed; habits of intemperance, impurity

falsehood, dishonesty, and fraud, prevail in every place, and neutralize all our efforts to evangelize and improve. It is incumbent on Christian ministers of every name, and the responsible members of their respective churches, to concentrate and enlarge their efforts for the overthrow of this moral hydra, still so rampant in a Christian land. Instead of wasting their strength in mutual recrimination and minor disputes, or of neutralizing each other's exertions by foolish jealousies, they should rather combine their counsels and their energies for the common good, and go on, "striving together for the faith of the gospel." Instead of regarding each other as rivals and competitors in pursuit of gain or fame, they should rather welcome one another to the field, where there is ample scope or a dense population, as fellow servants of the same Lord, professedly and really promoting the same divine cause. Instead of imitating the narrow spirit and needless jealousy of Joshua in his youth, when he hastily informed Moses that some of the elders were prophesying in the camp, and besought him to forbid them; how much better to imitate Moses, the man of God himself, who said to him, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets; and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them."* Instead of meanly attempting to entice from each other's ministry, persons of good character, who evince a due sense of religion and moral rectitude, by devoutly observing Christian ordinances in their own way; let them endeavour to awaken the irreligious to the observance of the sabbath, and to rescue the profligate from ruin; knowing that "he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." What are those discrepancies of opinion, or those forms of worship and of discipline, so hotly contested between different parties, when compared with the grand and essential truths in which all agree, and the supreme object and aim of Christian preaching, the advancement of faith and piety, the present holiness and final salvation of the people?

I do not mean, my dear sir, to recommend religious indifference, or a spurious liberality, even on points of subordinate importance, but in reference to the government and rituals of the church, as well as to matters of greater moment, would say, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." But, while every man holds

* Numb. xi. 28, 29.

fast his integrity, and supports with firmness and decision the peculiarities of his own church, because he believes them to be in accordance with the Holy Scriptures; let him also respect the feelings and conscientious persuasions of others, who have given equal proofs of their integrity, and the sincerity of their submission to the word of God. And since no man can be judged by another's conscience, but every man to his own master must stand or fall, we are commanded not to judge the doubtful thoughts of others, but to receive one another with Christian confidence and affection, though weak in faith, "even as Christ hath received us to the glory of God." Thus let ministers of the established Church, who believe that episcopacy is the form of government instituted by the apostles, by all means adhere to its discipline and order among themselves, and use all Christian means to evince its excellence. But let them likewise respect and acknowledge, as sincere though mistaken disciples of Christ, as real though imperfect branches of the church universal, the ministers and members of other communions, who prefer other forms of discipline and government, simply because they believe them to be in nearer accordance with the apostolic model.

The state of mind which induces people to be offended with each other, to depreciate each other's character and motives, to withhold from each other the offices of christian affection, simply because they differ in religious opinion, and prefer different forms of worship, although in other respects they are equally careful "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God;" is of all perverse things, the most unreasonable and perverse; and when it rises to rancour and intolerance, it is inexcusably vicious and unjust. Because my neighbour, a most excellent member of society, thinks the constitution and order of the established Church more apostolic than the congregational; because he every sabbath frequents the parish church for divine worship, in preference to the dissenters' meeting-house, and prefers the liturgy used in the former to the more simple or extempore services of the latter; shall I, holding different views, impeach his integrity, impute to him factious motives, question the validity of his faith and hope, refuse to acknowledge him as a Christian brother, and take upon me to treat him scornfully, as though he were "a heathen man and a publican," merely because I think him wrong in those points,

in which he gives not the preference to my system? To such a question every churchman would instantly reply, "No! certainly; such conduct on your part would be most sectarian and uncharitable, the very essence of bigotry and intolerance." Then I would say, Let my neighbour reverse the question, and since we have both the same natural rights, and differ from each other just to the same extent, let him apply to himself the golden rule of Christian conduct, and then go and do likewise. In short, we have as much right to hate and vilify our neighbours, because they differ from us in personal form and features, in their mental powers and attainments, in matters of taste or scientific speculation, as we have on the ground of speculative and ceremonial differences in religion. And while, for obvious reasons, members of the same communion, drawn together by similarity of views and interests, will naturally give the preference to each other's society, and, by a closer intimacy and accordance, will feel and manifest the warmer emotions of brotherly love; yet, this preference for our own church must never generate antipathy or indifference towards others, but should always live in unison with that more expansive charity which equally esteems good men of every name, and embraces the entire household of faith. No consistent protestant can assume the infallibility or perfection of his own church, either in doctrine or discipline, or unchristianize those who peaceably dissent from its communion. If the Bible alone be the standard of our religion, and if all men have the same right to judge even for themselves what is truth, the members of all churches are equally bound to respect one another, and have the same right to be respected. Since in all existing churches there are some errors and defects; since there is much to be amended before the constitution and discipline of any will be perfectly apostolic; all have enough to do in improving their own church, instead of extolling its pre-eminence and excommunicating others. And as moderation supplants party violence, and a sound judgment rectifies prejudice and error, we may hope to see all denominations disposed to break down the middle wall of partition, and to meet on equal terms and upon common ground; while all our churches, separately and collectively, will be approaching nearer and nearer to the sacred model.

If then my friend should ask me, on what ground Christian ministers of all denominations may and ought to be acknowledged by each other as the true and authorized

ministers of God, it will not be difficult to lay down some specific rule.—All persons who understand Christianity have a right to teach it, so far as others are willing to attend to them; but all have not the same right to assume the office, or to be received in the capacity of its ministers. While we maintain strenuously and inviolably our liberties as men, we are bound as Christians, “to do all things decently and in order,” according to the laws of Christ, and the usage or customs of the apostolic churches, so far as those laws and customs can be ascertained. When a person, from pure motives, feels himself strongly desirous of undertaking the Christian ministry, the principle of propriety and order, and various apostolic injunctions and precedents, require him to submit his wishes and his qualifications to the inspection of his pastor and brethren, with a view to be guided by their decision. Having obtained their sanction, and prepared himself for the work by appropriate study, and being in the course of providence called to exercise the pastoral function in some Christian church,—he should then be solemnly ordained or publicly designated to the sacred office, by the prayer of a presiding elder, “with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery,” according to the faith and order of the community in which he officiates, or to which he belongs. This principle, indeed, is virtually recognized in the Church of England, as a relic of primitive times, since the candidate for holy orders is not only obliged to declare that he is inwardly moved to the work by the Holy Ghost, but must have a definite appointment to some cure or incumbency. Here, however, the person to be ordained, for the most part, receives his appointment from a single patron, without consulting his parishioners; while in ours, he has been chosen by the church, after due trial of his gifts, and a full knowledge of his character,—which we conceive to be the better security, and more in accordance with the usage of apostolic times. But all persons entering the ministry under these auspices, while they hold fast the form of sound words, and maintain the consistency of their profession as approved ministers in their own denomination or church, ought, we conceive, to be distinctly and without hesitation, recognized by the ministers and members of all other churches as duly authorized ministers of God. This mutual recognition requires no compromise of principle, nor the slightest depreciation of that order which either party believes to be the most apostolic; but simply

the acknowledgement of each other's conscientious integrity as disciples of the same Lord, all conceding to one another what they wish to be conceded to themselves, and each receiving others as he himself wishes to be received. While one party insists on the exclusive principle, others are compelled to act as though they assumed the same, which widens and multiplies existing dissensions. But the principle of mutual concession would soften the asperity of unavoidable differences, and form the basis of a possible union of christian churches, more truly catholic and comprehensive than has yet existed since the age of the apostles. The former, by their arrogant and unchristian assumptions, will be guilty of perpetuating the rancour and animosity which for ages have inflicted incalculable injury on the Christian cause, and which are still one of the chief obstructions to its wider extension abroad and moral efficiency at home. But the other, practically exemplified by all parties, would gradually remove these evils, till bigotry shall be entombed, and peace and harmony firmly established in our churches. When faith, hope, and charity, so often separated, would again walk hand in hand, and by their united and generous influence, impart to the church universal the beauty and strength of her millennial glory.

If any additional motive were necessary to enforce this principle, I might intreat Christian ministers of every name, within and without the established church, to consider the vast responsibility of their office, and the train of consequences, spiritual and eternal, to themselves and to others, which depend on the faithful and efficient discharge of its functions. Are they not responsible to their own consciences—to the congregations over which they preside—to their brethren and fellow-labourers in the ministry around them—to the denomination or community with which they are connected—to the whole Christian church in its collective capacity—and especially to the supreme Master and Judge of all, at the final disclosures and decisions of the last day? If this fact were duly felt and considered, and allowed its proper influence in all our official engagements and private intercourse, it would surely create a practical sense of our unworthiness, suppress all arrogant and uncharitable assumptions, induce every one in his own sphere to prosecute his work with a single eye to the glory of God and the good of souls, and extinguish even the disposition to pass upon each other any unmerited reproach, any bitter invectives, or indis-

criminate censures. It would constrain ministers of every church, while they sought their own, to rejoice in the success of others; to welcome and encourage each other in their respective spheres, as workers together for God in the same divine cause; to merge all feelings of rivalry, all calculations of interest, all ritual differences, in the common salvation; and while cherishing an humble hope of their own acceptance at the great day, would induce each to desire and to anticipate the gracious acceptance of others, and to echo in every sanctuary the generous prayer of an apostle, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen."

Thus having, as I would hope, fully and calmly refuted the arrogant and uncharitable assumptions so often avowed or insinuated by many of the established clergy, permit me, dear sir, in conclusion, to commend what I have written to the candour of any who may read it, and to the divine blessing. And if its perusal should, in some measure, repress the tone of bigotry and intolerance still so prevalent, and should strengthen those sentiments of candour and forbearance, humility, brotherly kindness, and mutual esteem, which ought to distinguish all "who profess and call themselves Christians;" it will answer the end proposed, and realize the best wishes of your sincere and affectionate friend, the Author:

PHILAGATHON.

ESSEX, FEB. 28, 1837.

NOTE A.

See Article XXVI of the Church of England, in which this absurd opinion seems to be sanctioned, and by a reference to which it will probably be defended and maintained. But none of these Articles, or the XXXIX together, can convert error into truth, or absurdity into good sense, nor render the wickedness of bad men or bad ministers innocuous. And if such be the meaning and design of the XXVIth Article, it makes the matter worse, since this very sentiment, which we are told to be most unscriptural and pernicious, instead of being entertained or taught by some of its ministers, would seem to be embodied in the very constitution of the Church. For the credit of the Church, however, the same Article enjoins that enquiry should be made respecting evil ministers, and that being accused and found guilty, they shall be deposed. But if the validity and benefit of Christian ordinances remain the same, "although they be ministered by evil men," or if the usefulness of such parochial ministers be not impaired, or the cause of religion injured by the scandal of their impiety, why have them depose or censured? Thus the latter

part of the Article stultifies the former, and, if it were not a dead letter might in some degree prevent or remedy the evil; while, in point of fact, the former needs revision, and the latter enforcement.

NOTE B.

It is well known that the authority of tradition as held by the apostolic fathers and their successors in the second and third centuries, for ages before the Reformation, supplanted the authority of the Holy Scriptures in the church of Rome, and was treated with great deference by some of the Reformers themselves. But during the last century, owing to the diffusion of more liberal sentiments, the authority of tradition has stood very low in public estimation, and the opinion of the Fathers on matters of controversy has been deemed scarcely worth quoting. Attempts, however, have been recently made, in visitation sermons and other publications, to rescue tradition from contempt, and to invest it with revived authority as our best guide in the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, especially on points of order and discipline. If the constitution and liturgy of the Church of England were tried by this test, it is thought they would appear much more apostolical than when judged of simply by the New Testament, and that even the Dissenters themselves would be constrained to acknowledge the very high antiquity, if not divine origin, of her peculiar forms. But her advocates, in using this line of defence, approach so near to the Church of Rome, and resort to trains of reasoning so similar, that it requires no little penetration to discern the difference between them. The real difference, however, seems to consist in this, that the Church of Rome reserves to his Holiness the Pope, and his council for the time being, the special and exclusive power to determine infallibly what are and what are not apostolical traditions; while the Church of England assumes that those traditions were infallibly settled by her Reformers, and that being embodied in her constitution and liturgy, have been committed to the safe custody of the Church herself, that is, to the bishops and clergy, "with power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith;" in whose decisions all true churchmen should implicitly confide. This, however, is not a renunciation, but simply a transfer of papal infallibility and power. But while such attempts to decry and suppress the exercise of private judgment, and to revive a semi-papal doctrine, may impose on the credulity and superstition of weak minds, they will only excite disgust in the liberal and enlightened, and betray the unsoundness of the system they are meant to serve. If a reference to the first ages should prove any thing in favour of the Established Church and against Dissenters, it would only confirm what candid men of all denominations are ready to concede, that in avoiding one extreme we may be verging toward another; and that all existing forms of church government need to be remodelled and improved. But while the inquirer after apostolical tradition finds himself bewildered in a mass of contradiction and conflicting testimony, tradition against tradition, council against council, and one father against another, the question will constantly arise, and the grand principle of Protestantism be more firmly established; "What is written in the law? How readest thou? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this rule, it is because there is no light in them." "THE BIBLE, THE BIBLE ONLY IS THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS."

Finis.

1415

PROPOSALS

FOR

THE CREATION OF A FUND

TO BE APPLIED TO THE

BUILDING AND ENDOWMENT

OF

ADDITIONAL CHURCHES

IN THE METROPOLIS.

BY CHARLES JAMES *Blomfield, D.D.*
LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

LONDON :

B. FELLOWES, LUDGATE-STREET ;
J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON, WATERLOO-PLACE ; AND
HATCHARD AND SON, PICCADILLY.

M DCCC XXXVI.

LONDON :
R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD-STREET-HILL,
DOCTORS' COMMONS.

PROPOSALS,

&c. &c.

IN directing the attention of the public to the spiritual wants of the metropolis, and to the duty and necessity of making a combined and vigorous effort to supply them, through the medium of the Established Church, I avail myself of the following statement, contained in the second Report of the Church Commissioners, which has been recently laid upon the tables of both Houses of Parliament.

“ The most prominent of those defects, which cripple the energies of the Established Church, and circumscribe its usefulness, is the want of churches and ministers in the large towns and populous districts of the kingdom. The growth of the population has been so rapid as to outrun

the means, possessed by the Establishment, of meeting its spiritual wants: and the result has been, that a vast proportion of the people are left destitute of the opportunities of public worship and Christian instruction, even when every allowance is made for the exertions of those religious bodies, which are not in connexion with the Established Church.

“ It is not necessary, in this Report, to enter into all the details, by which the truth of this assertion might be proved. It will be sufficient to state the following facts as examples. Looking to those parishes only, which contain each a population exceeding 10,000, we find that in London and its suburbs, including the parishes on either bank of the Thames, there are four parishes, or districts, each having a population exceeding 20,000, and containing an aggregate of 166,000 persons, with church room for 8,200, (not quite one twentieth of the whole;) and only eleven clergymen.

“ There are twenty-one others, the aggregate population of which is 739,000, while the church-room is for 66,155, (not one-tenth of the whole;) and only forty-five clergymen.

“ There are nine others, with an aggregate population of 232,000, and church room for

27,327, (not one-eighth of the whole ;) and only nineteen clergymen.

“ The entire population of these thirty-four parishes amounts to 1,137,000, while there is church-room only for 101,682. Supposing that church-room is required for one-third, there ought to be sittings for 379,000 persons. There is therefore a deficiency of 277,318 sittings : or if we allow 25,000 for the number of sittings in proprietary chapels, the deficiency will be 252,318.

“ Allowing one church for a population of 3,000, there would be required in these parishes 379 churches ; whereas there are in fact only 69, or, if proprietary chapels be added, about 100, leaving a deficiency of 279 ; while there are only 139 clergymen, in a population exceeding a million.

“ But a comparison between the amount of population, and that of church-room, will not furnish, by itself, an accurate view of the provision which is made for the spiritual wants of the people ; because many of the chapels, which contribute to swell the amount of church-room, have no particular districts assigned to them ; and we consider the assignment of a district to each church, or chapel, to be necessary to the ends of pastoral instruction, and to carrying into

full effect the parochial economy of the Established Church.

“ The evils, which flow from this deficiency in the means of religious instruction and pastoral superintendence, greatly outweigh all other inconveniences, resulting from any defects or anomalies in our ecclesiastical institutions ; and it unfortunately happens, that while these evils are the most urgent of all, and most require the application of an effectual remedy, they are precisely those, for which a remedy can be least easily found.

“ The resources, which the Established Church possesses, and which can properly be made available to that purpose, in whatever way they may be husbanded, or distributed, are evidently quite inadequate to the exigency of the case ; and all that we can hope to do is, gradually to diminish the intensity of the evil.”

It is true, that during the last twenty-five years much has been done towards that end, partly by the aid of parliamentary grants for the erection of new churches, partly by parochial contributions, and partly by the exertions of individual benevolence, and the efforts of associated Churchmen, through the medium of the

Incorporated Society for the Building and Enlargement of Churches and Chapels. In sixteen of the parishes above referred to, which are in the diocese of London, thirty-three new churches have been erected within that period, and additional accommodation provided for 54,000 persons. But the numbers, given in the Report of the Church Commissioners, represent the actual state of things at the present time, after all that has been done, to lessen the fearful disproportion which exists between the population of this vast city, and the provision made by the Church for its religious instruction. At this moment there is in the metropolis, and its suburbs, omitting all notice of those parishes which contain less than 7,000 inhabitants, a population of not less than 1,380,000, with church-room for only 140,000, or little more than one-tenth of the whole.

In a Charge, delivered to the Clergy of the diocese of London, in the year 1834, it is said, that “in the eastern and north-eastern districts of the metropolis, there are ten parishes, containing together a population of 353,460 persons. In these parishes there are 18 churches and chapels, served by 24 incumbents and curates : the average being not quite one

church or chapel for every 19,000 souls, and one clergyman for every 14,000."

The evils, which flow from this state of things, and which must continue to increase, unless some remedy be speedily applied, are such as cannot be contemplated without grief by those, who desire to bring into the fold of a scriptural Church the thousands, who are now destitute of pastoral care and instruction; nor without the most serious apprehension, when it is considered, in how great a degree the stability and prosperity of a country are dependent upon the principles and habits of those classes, which form the basis of the social fabric.

It is a work of prudence, not less than of charity, to impart to the multitudes, who are now scarcely acquainted even with the first principles of Christianity, a knowledge of its duties and consolations, its motives and restraints; and the most hopeful method of effecting this, is to send more labourers into the Lord's harvest; to increase the numbers of churches, and clergymen; to bring home, to the very doors and hearths of the most ignorant and neglected of the population, the ordinances, the solemnities, the decencies, and the charities of our apostolical Church; to divide the moral wildernesses of this

vast city into manageable districts, each with its place of worship, its schools, and its local institutions.

It is to this work that I earnestly entreat the prompt and liberal assistance of the Christian public. The examples of Glasgow and Manchester,* where large sums have already been raised within the last year for a similar object, forbid me to entertain any doubt as to the success of this appeal. If this object be important any where, it is surely *most* important with reference to the metropolis ; and I cannot forbear from indulging a sanguine hope, that an effort will be made for its attainment, commensurate with the breadth and depth of the evil which it is intended to cure. It is an object, in which not merely the inhabitants of this great city, but the people of the empire at large are interested ; for the influence of the metropolis upon all the towns of the kingdom, and upon the springs of the Government itself, is every day increasing.

* A sum exceeding 20,000*l.* was subscribed in a very short time at Glasgow, by contributors of 200*l.* each and upwards, in aid of a plan for the erection and endowment of twenty new Churches in that city. In Manchester, subscriptions, to the amount of nearly 12,000*l.* were obtained in a few days after the first proposal of a similar scheme.

My desire and hope is, that by means of donations, much higher in amount than those which are usually given as annual subscriptions, or for temporary objects, a very large fund may forthwith be raised, for the purpose of building, or purchasing, and partly endowing at least fifty new churches, or chapels, in the most populous parts of the metropolis and its suburbs. In many cases, opportunities will present themselves of purchasing buildings, which may be fitted, at a moderate cost, for the purpose of divine worship, according to the rites and usages of the Established Church.*

I would propose, that where donations to this fund shall exceed a certain sum, (say 100*l*.) they shall be paid by four equal yearly instalments.

Generally speaking, I should desire, that to every one of these new churches a district should be assigned, within the limits of which the minister might have, practically, the care of souls: but cases may perhaps occur, in which it will be advisable to build chapels of ease, to be served by curates, under the superintendence of the incumbent of the parish.

* In some places it may perhaps be practicable to make a part of the building available as a school-room, a plan which has been carried into effect in St. Peter's Church, Saffron-Hill.

With respect to endowment, a certain fixed income should be secured to the minister, independent of pew-rents, the amount of which, in poor districts, must, of necessity, be small. Grants for this purpose may be made from the fund: but I have reason to expect, that considerable means will be afforded to me, for the endowment of additional churches, from the property belonging to the prebendal stalls in St. Paul's Cathedral, the suppression of which, as they shall become vacant, has been recommended by the Church Commissioners; and to some portion of the property of which I may fairly assert a claim, in behalf of those parts of my diocese, which are in a state of spiritual destitution.

The endowment, however, of these new churches will probably, in any case, be so small, that the right of nominating ministers to them will impose a task of difficulty, as well as responsibility, upon those who shall possess it. The opinion of the greater number of those friends of the Church whom I have consulted on this matter, is, that where the right of nomination does not follow the course of law, as it would in the case of chapels of ease, it should be vested, generally, in the Bishop of the diocese. If in any case it should be thought expedient to

adopt a different arrangement, the patronage may be vested in individuals, or in official trustees; but I am desirous of avoiding the system of elective trusteeship. Where parties are willing to build and endow additional churches, they may obtain the patronage for themselves, or for trustees, under the existing law (1 and 2 Will. 4, c. 38.)

Upon the whole, I appeal, with no inconsiderable degree of confidence, to the humanity, as well as to the Christian charity of my countrymen, to furnish the means, not merely of commencing, but of carrying on far towards its accomplishment, under the blessing of God, this most important work; the work of evangelizing thousands, and hundreds of thousands of their poor brethren; of reclaiming them from practical heathenism; of imparting to them the Word and Sacraments of God, through the ministry of his Church; of placing them under the guidance and teaching of men, rightly appointed to the office, and duly qualified for its discharge; of gathering them together into Christian neighbourhoods, each round its centre of knowledge and godliness; of giving increased efficiency, and therefore increased stability to our Church; and so promoting at once the cause of social

order, and pure religion, and bringing down a blessing from Him, who is the author of peace, and lover of concord, and the giver of national as well as individual prosperity.

It is my intention shortly to submit to the friends of the Church more specific proposals for the raising and distribution of the Fund; and in the meantime I shall gladly receive the suggestions of those, who may be desirous of promoting the measure; and also such promises of support, as may enable me to accompany the proposals with a list of subscriptions, which may be an omen of final success.

In the preceding Address I have urged the necessity of raising a fund by subscription. In so doing, I would not be understood to relinquish the claim, which I consider the people to have, upon the Government of the country, for a due supply of the opportunities of public worship, and Christian teaching, through the medium of the Established Church; a claim, which appears to me to be implied in the very principle of a religious establishment, and which has been, on more than one occasion, formally

recognised by the Legislature.* Although I do not entertain any sanguine hope, as to the success of an appeal to Parliament, for aid towards the erection of churches in the country at large, I think it not impossible, that the peculiar circumstances of the case might even now be considered to justify a legislative interference, for the purpose of making an adequate provision for the spiritual wants of the metropolis, at the expense of its inhabitants; but that expense so trifling, that its burthen would be scarcely perceptible to the individuals, amongst whom it would be divided. The 9th Anne, chap. 22, granted to the Queen a duty of 2*s.* a chaldron upon all coals imported into London, to be applied to the building of fifty new churches in, or near, the cities of London and Westminster, “and for making such churches and chapels as were already built, and capable thereof, parish churches; and for purchasing houses for the habitations of the ministers of the said churches.” The 1st Geo. 1, chap. 23, imposed a duty of 3*s.* a chaldron upon all coals imported as aforesaid, to be appropriated towards maintaining the ministers of the said churches. The churches

* 9 Anne, c. 22; 1 Geo. 1. c. 23; 58 Geo. 3. c. 45.

which were actually built, did not indeed amount to half the number intended; and in some cases there appears to have been too lavish an expenditure of the money so granted; yet we have reason to be thankful, that so great an addition was made to the Church's means of providing for the pastoral care of the metropolis. At the present time, the duty of 8*d.* a ton, levied upon coals imported into London, produces about 75,000*l.* per annum, which revenue is mortgaged for twenty years. The addition of 2*d.* a ton to this duty, which would be scarcely felt by the consumers, would produce somewhat more than 18,000*l.* per annum, upon which, if mortgaged for a certain number of years, a sum of money might be borrowed, sufficient for the erection of thirty or forty new churches; or it might be applied, year by year, to the gradual accomplishment of that object.

I make no unreasonable request, when I entreat the members of the Legislature to consider, at how cheap a rate of personal contribution a vast and permanent benefit might thus be secured to the metropolis. The proposed additional duty of 2*d.* per ton (the price of coals varying from 25*s.* to 35*s.*) would enhance the cost to the consumer in so small a proportion,

that it would hardly deserve the name of a burthen. A family, consuming fifteen tons of coals annually, would contribute no more than one half-crown per annum ; while the poor man, whose consumption is limited to a single ton, would give only two-pence per annum, for a purpose the most beneficial to himself and to his brethren, that of providing himself, and them, with opportunities of worshipping God, and learning his will, and of perpetuating to their children's children all the advantages of pastoral instruction and guidance, which are afforded by our Established Church.

C. J. LONDON.

LONDON,
April, 1836.

THE END.



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